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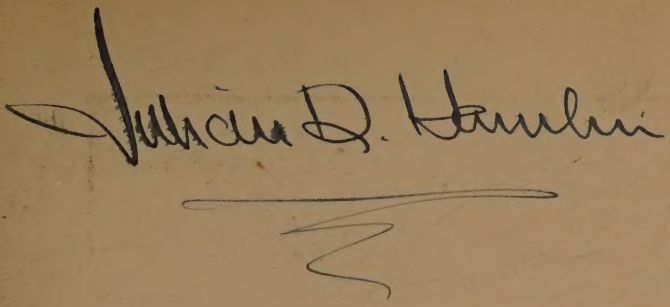

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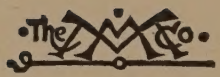
MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI



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MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI

A Sketch of the Life of

MARIE-ANNE-HERVÉ-BAZIN

Religious of the Society of Marie-Réparatrice

BY

MME. S. S.

WITH A PREFACE BY

M. RENÉ BAZIN

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FIFTH EDITION
OF UNE RELIGIEUSE RÉPARATRICE BY

REV. MICHAEL P. HILL, S.J.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

The welcome extended to the original of this work and the readiness with which translators are at present undertaking to reproduce it in their respective vernaculars should augur well for its reception at the hands of English readers. As regards its intrinsic merits the book will speak for itself. It will appeal chiefly, of course, to those who are attracted to this species of literature on its own account; but in the richness of the character portrayed and in the skill of the artist it possesses elements of interest which should appeal to a much larger public. The French are acknowledged masters of the art of producing what may be called the little classics of religious biography, and many of the characteristics of these will be found in the present volume.

The life of Mother Marie de l'Agnus Dei was one of the many precious and beautiful lives which have shed a luster upon the annals of the Society of Marie-Réparatrice (an order of religious which has not yet completed the seventh decade of its existence) and so strikingly exemplify that outpouring of divine grace upon a religious institute in the days of its first fervor that often crowns the life-work of a saintly foundress. The brief and secluded, though no less remarkable, career of the subject of this memoir will, in its own measure, enable us to see the finger of God in the founding and propagation of the society to which she was called. The Society of Marie-Réparatrice, known so favorably and in so

many places in the other hemisphere and no less favorably here in America, will doubtless in the near future win its way to the hearts of all who are attracted to the work of reparation for sin; and undoubtedly the wonderful heroism evoked in the soul of Marie de l'Agnus Dei by her vocation to the Society will lead the readers of her life to the conclusion that it must have been an excellent tree which produced such fair fruit.

But apart from her character as Réparatrice the life of this young religious has a charm all its own, by reason of its remarkable mingling of the natural and the supernatural. In her soul the highest graces flourish by the side of the deepest human affections, whilst rarest gifts of intellect, mirthfulness of spirit, and even a keen sense of humor, so far from being thrust into the background by religion, are its inseparable companions and its constant auxiliaries.

As regards the present English version, the only point to which we would call attention is what may seem to be an indiscriminate use of *You* and *Thou* as applied to God in the English text. In all informal prayers, aspirations and confidences passing between the soul of the religious and God the more familiar *You* is purposely employed in preference to *Thou,* whilst the latter is reserved for formal acts of consecration and the like. Familiar union with God would hardly find expression in the more solemn forms of speech, especially such childlike confidences as those of Marie de l'Agnus Dei.

It only remains for us to thank, as we do most heartily, our much-esteemed community of Réparatrices in New York City, for helpful coöperation in the production of this English version of the work.

PREFACE

The young religious whose life is sketched in this volume was my niece. When a few short years ago I saw her laughing and playing with her sisters and other companions, in the heyday of youthful gayety, and gaining in bodily strength, I little thought she would pass away from earth before myself. As little did I fancy that after so brief a career she should be set up as a bright example to others, or that I should have occasion to preface an account of her life with some pages of personal recollections,—or, finally, that I should now be approaching the subject with that deep feeling of respect which we all experience in the presence of what is purer and greater than ourselves.

At the time of which I speak, while Marie-Anne was still a girl, we were living in a nook in the country in the neighborhood of Marans, in the northwestern portion of the department of Maine-et-Loire. We occupied a holding which had come to us by inheritance, in the midst of a Christian population in which we numbered many friends, and amid the great oaks planted along the slopes of the trenches that enclosed, here and there, fields of wheat, or meadows, or fields of clover or of coleseed. Marie-Anne was exceedingly fond of this bit of countryside, with its solitude and its bracing moral atmosphere, in which faith and tradition abounded; and it is there that I see her at this moment,—and indeed

shall always see her,—a girl slight of form, brisk and intelligent, but withal timid. At least I thought her timid; though it may be that even in her tender years she had begun to efface herself and had learned to be silent when there was no need of speaking. We know so little about people during their lifetime.

I remember, among other things, that she had a very noiseless manner of walking, and stepped softly and was silent when she came into company or left it. I regarded her simply as a pious girl when really she was a little saint. I should have thought that hers were the dreams and ambitions of girls of her age. Instead, in her notebooks, such as other girls would have filled with copies or paraphrases of sentimental verses, or with glowing records of childish friendships, she was writing mystic confidences, at once poetical and neatly expressed,—as witness the following, which dates from her seventeenth year:—

> Jesus, in this morning's communion, promised, if I were willing, to live with me as a little Child, just as He once lived under the eye of Mary, as she plied her daily tasks. But in order that He may be pleased with my company I must continually speak to Him with affection, in imitation of Mary at Nazareth. I must, for instance, say to Him, as He has taught me: "What do You wish, Jesus? What shall I do for You? Maybe You have need of me? How I love You, dear Jesus! and a thousand things of the kind.

It was during this period and in the same notebook that she wrote the following:—

> Jesus, whatsoever You do I will love You. If You flee from me I will fly after You. If You hide I will find You. If You give me cold looks I will tell You again that I love You.

Her life in the country had its many long hours of solitude, and these she utilized for prayer. Life in the city brought her frequently into company; but this was less to her taste, as it divided up her day too much and broke the quiet routine of unvarying occupations which was a need of her contemplative soul; but she made it all an occasion of merit. She occasionally enjoyed a few weeks' quiet at the seashore, and there she wrote: "It is You who are hiding in these waves, and there my soul adores You." She saw God where He really is—everywhere. She spoke to Him, and the answer she received was not vague, but clear and distinct. It came not in the guise of emotion, but was expressed in words without sound, words that she must listen to, which left a clear and vivid impression on her soul. Such elect souls move upon heights that are touched directly by the light of the Infinite.

We are here in the presence of a reality at once certain and inexplicable. Religious vocation is a *fact,* which cannot be denied by those who know how to observe and have had a close acquaintance with one or several persons called to the religious state. If these observers are sincere and are not blinded by irreligious feeling or by the pain consequent upon the loss of a daughter or a sister, they must needs acknowledge that many souls, and those the purest, the tenderest, the most cheerful, the most thoughtful and sensible, have heard a word spoken—a call—against which they may more or less

struggle, but whose meaning they cannot doubt, which leads them to make the hardest sacrifices,—the sacrifice of present happiness and, what is more, the hope of happiness for the morrow, as well as all the illusion by which it is magnified. Those who receive this call differ exceedingly in character, and yet one and the same spirit of generosity brings them all to the same goal.

Such vocations cannot be explained by natural attraction, at least in the ordinary sense of the words, for a religious vocation obliges one to conquer nature and runs counter to more natural desires than it satisfies; nor by force of imagination, for the convents are not filled with imaginative temperaments; nor by education, which can develop a sentiment but not impart it. Education, if it were purposely directed towards the religious state, would long since have been its ruin, as it would fill the convents with unworthy subjects, who would have learned the lesson of vocation only by rote. Nor can such vocations be explained by disappointed love, for the vast majority of girls enter the convent at the age of eighteen, twenty or twenty-two, after no such painful experience and after a refusal of their own accord to enter the married state. Their one regret is for the wounded affections of a family, of which they will prove, though absent, the most faithful members. And though one of these causes did operate, it could not account for the effect. The natural cannot be vanquished except by the supernatural; and even though the very idea of the supernatural is rejected *a priori* by certain minds, the fact of the supernatural still remains, as is attested by those who have had experience of the religious life, who declare that though their wills may have been prepared by nature, they have

been persuaded to act thus by a divine call and have been sustained by a force superior to their own.

One highly gifted woman, the Countess de Saint-Martial, who was born a Protestant but died a daughter of Saint Vincent de Paul, once wrote to her mother, who ill understood and even thought there was something cruel in her daughter's vocation:—

> Rest assured that, having been brought here by the fullest exercise of my liberty, because I thought this the place marked out for me, I should nevertheless not hesitate to leave here if I did not find my soul at peace. . . . If I remain, you may be sure it will be through the grace of vocation, which confers the grace of perseverance. Neither imagination nor mental exaltation would suffice for perseverance in daily sacrifice.

In the psychology of this last remark is a fine touch of reality and truth. The same religious wrote again:—

> Some embrace the religious life for pure love of God, and these are the perfect; others, because it suits their characters and tastes, and these have less to suffer; some, out of gratitude to God; others again, in order to shelter their weakness from the seductive fascinations of the world; in a word, many are the motives, but in all cases there must be a divine call.

It seems to me, after reading the letters of Marie-Anne, that her vocation must have been of the most perfect kind. She wrote when in the bloom of youth and in perfect health: "My desire is to suffer,—to suffer

my whole life,—but I shall be a saint. . . ." Here we have the most mysterious of all vocations, that of suffering. In a brief space of time Marie-Anne will have lifted it to the highest degree of moral beauty. She will have risen to a height to which it is consoling to poor weaklings like ourselves to see their fellow creatures ascend. For these souls are at once the redemption and the counterpoise of countless shameful and cowardly deeds. They are the real source of happiness of those who repudiate them. Unknown to the world, they are its hope and its ransom. It is they who are continually renewing the ideal of religious life and action. They are warding off from the nations the chastisements that have been a thousand times deserved; and to any one who believes in a God it is they who account for the resurrection which in our day has been vouchsafed France, a country Christian to the core and most fruitful in saints.

But where are these saintly souls? We scarcely can say; and yet they are everywhere about us. Up to the moment when their vocation suddenly takes them from our midst, how few of us even guess their presence? How few remember them after they are gone? Though marked with the sign invisible, they grow up unknown to the world, in our families and in those of our friends; they are found among the rich and the poor, among peasants and workers in shops and factories. At this very hour, when they are an object of persecution at the hands of the State, thousands more are born to their same high destiny. They wear the smile of youth on their faces; they are loved; they know the same ties as ourselves; they share our purer joys; but they are stronger than we. Sooner or later you will learn that one of them has given up everything, and then you will say, "She

was indeed the best of girls—there was something so very pure about her." But there it ends: the world afterward moves on in entire oblivion of these who are its salvation.

Marie-Anne resolved to suffer in order to make reparation for the sins of men. Out of love for those who will never know her she begins by giving up those whom she loves. In her notebooks, which she never imagined would be read by others, she sets down clearly the regrets she will have to overcome. As the great hour approached, her life was one mingled of human suffering and more than human joy.

> *January 5, 1895.*—As I look at things around me I say to myself it is for the last time. Many persons are perhaps astonished to see me follow them with a long lingering look. They do not know—poor dear friends—that I am saying in my own mind, "I shall never see you again."
>
> *April 17, 1895.*
>
> These plants I am setting in the ground I shall never see in full flower; what a joy it is to think that though it takes so short a time for them to grow, yet I shall be in the house of God before they have bloomed.

Those who are repelled by the idea of expiation or by that of the reversibility of merits, those whose heads turn dizzy at so high an elevation, will do well, I can assure them, not to read this book. It is all but devoid of events,—unless it be called an event when a soul has achieved one of the stages of its ascents toward God.

Admitted to the novitiate of the Réparatrices, this girl

who wept and suffered so much upon leaving her mother and her sisters and brothers, now, in her longing for sacrifice, begs of God to deprive her of the spiritual consolations with which she has been favored.

> My Lord and my God (she writes), I offer to You to-day the sacrifice that costs the most to my nature and to my heart. Seeing You, my dear Jesus, subjected each day by the sins of all the world to the unspeakable torments which You endured in Your agony and on the cross, where, under the weight of all the crimes committed by men, You felt as though repelled and abandoned by Your Father, I wish to unite my sufferings to Yours and drink of the same chalice. O my crucified Jesus, my Spouse and my King, from this moment and forever I accept all the sense of abandonment, all the dryness, aridity, desolation, that may weigh heavily on my heart. I am willing to feel myself powerless, useless and miserable, to feel as though I were repelled and abandoned by You and lying lifeless at your feet . . . on the sole condition that by this state of internal martyrdom I may promote Your glory and save the souls of men.

This little recluse is a conqueror of souls, a missionary of the world invisible. She is visited with illness, but she has offered her very life for sinful humanity; and when she feels her offering is accepted she speaks in accents that reveal the greatness of her heart. Notwithstanding her humility she feels closely united to the world from which she has fled, because she wishes to store up merit in its behalf. "I feel for the whole world in every heart-beat," she says, and adds: "My beloved Jesus,

for my consolation give me souls, that I may give them back to You, and that I may cast them into your arms and say, 'My dear Jesus, send me yet more sacrifices, if they have this value in your sight.' "

By degrees, all external activity became physically impossible to this child whose dream it had been to go, after her novitiate, to the field of foreign missions. She did indeed leave France, but only because driven into exile, and she had hardly more than arrived in the land of exile when she died, at the age of four-and-twenty years, the first, no doubt, of those very numerous religious to whom the persecution directed against the Catholic Church has proved fatal. Who can estimate how many religious who have sought refuge abroad have already died in consequence of the journey forced upon the proscribed; or of utter impoverishment; or of maladies contracted in strange climates; or of affliction of soul, against which even superior natures are not proof?

Marie-Anne had had intimations from on high of her approaching death. She had written in the course of a retreat in 1900: "I am beginning to have great hopes of not living much longer," and later she had noted, "Next year I shall be in my eternal retreat." Her prediction came true. Marie-Anne had that love of God which is truly stronger than death, and her faith and trust were expressed in words no less sublime than these: "If I am destroyed, *Thou* canst *not* be!" She was dying, but without regrets; she was suffering, but she was fortified by so many consolations that she cried out, "My heart is overflowing with joy in my tribulation." She possessed the secret of omnipotence, who in the anguish of an incurable malady, in poverty, in voluntary detachment from all the joys of earth, could write to her sister,

who was herself soon to be drawn to the cloister, these beautiful and noble words: "Well, let us keep our souls in unruffled peace by means of a tranquil energy. A flower tossed about by the winds lets fall the dew of heaven; but the calm lily, seated firmly on its stem, preserves its dew, is nourished by it and shines with its brightness."

A priest well acquainted with her saintly life who had acted as her spiritual director has rendered this testimony in her favor: "What a large career she achieved in a few short years. She was a child, but a child schooled to wisdom in infirmity, in suffering, in humiliation, in love."

For this reason it has seemed fitting that the life of our little heroine be written, and the task has been accomplished by one who was an observer of her life. In the memoir before us the largest space has been allotted to the letters and spiritual notes of this girl whose life was an interior one. It is well, it seems to me, that this plan has been adopted, for thus the reading of these pages will be fruitful beyond the mere awakening of pity (though the pity itself would be salutary) for a child who so quickly passed from earth. Many readers will find in them lessons of nobleness, of courage, of faith, and, finally, of love for mankind, which is a magnificent virtue that is given a more solid foundation in Christian teaching than in any other,—a virtue which Christianity alone can render effective; to which it gives infinite expansion, both in space and in time; and which it raises to the high level where it becomes expiation of the sins of the unknown and the sins of the countless multitude of the living and the dead, that was the vocation, the rule, the entire life of the subject of this biography.

Perhaps, also—for who can guess the fortunes of a copy of a book?—these pages will be read by some of those who are sincere in their enmity to religious orders but who know nothing of those whom they are persecuting or of Him against whom they are contending. Such readers will probably understand only in part the soul of this religious; for without faith it is impossible to catch the full significance of her generosity, or of her patience, or of her joy. Yet even they cannot but have a human feeling for this girl who became detached from all the ambitions to which they are subject. They will see here in their living reality the aspirations, the tendencies, the impulses, the solicitudes of a contemplative religious; the purest charity operating in a sphere in which its presence is most needed, where moral misery abides; they will clearly perceive that it is a bad and vain attitude to take of opposition to the liberty of perfection,—that there will always be souls like that of our young religious, which nothing earthly can hinder or daunt, because their love moves on a plane above the earth; that convents may be closed, crucifixes broken, great works of zeal brought to ruin, and men and women condemned to misery because they have risen above the average morality,—but that the flame of divine love cannot be extinguished; that the world, in spite of itself, will possess saints, and that violence is powerless against the ideal.

René Bazin.

Les Rangeardières, April 6, 1904.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI

Chapter I

Marie-Anne-Henriette-Lucie Hervé-Bazin was the fourth daughter in immediate succession in a household in which a son was very much desired; hence her birth caused her parents a momentary disappointment. But this feeling soon gave way to a deep tenderness for the dear little one whom God had sent; and her father even felt a sort of preference for things as they were, which he never relinquished. He would seem to have had a presentiment of the special gifts of grace that were to be his child's portion in life.

On the day of her birth, it was in the following words that M. Hervé-Bazin recorded the event in his family journal:—

> *Angers, May 13, 1877.*—Still another little girl, daughter of Our Lady of Lourdes, to whom she is dedicated. She was born this morning, Sunday, during the hour of High Mass. May she be blessed, and may she lead a Christian life! The day was fair and bright. I heard a dove cooing in the wood, and several roses opened their buds in the garden.

And some days later, the mother wrote in the same journal:—

> These are the last days we shall spend in our house, and I feel sore at heart at leaving it; the more so when I think of our dear little Marie-Anne. I love her with my whole heart, this dear little fourth daughter, and it seems to me I might even love her too fondly. I thank Thee, my God, for having given her to us; and may Thy will be done, as Thou hast not been pleased to send us a son.

Marie-Anne was baptized privately on the day of her birth. The ceremonies of baptism were supplied on the 25th of July, her father's feast-day, at Saint Bartholomew's, by the aged curé of the parish.

She grew to be a charming child. She was a frail and delicate little creature. In appearance and manner she was in her tenderest infancy what she remained for the rest of her life—small and slender, a little timid, and with dark eyes that sparkled brightly and shed a vivid light over all her features. She ate but little and slept even less. One might almost have said that she was indifferent, even then, to the things of earth. Her rearing required exceptional care, and her parents felt they must watch over her more tenderly and unremittingly than over the other children. After her parents, she owed her life to the devotion of a young Breton woman, whose attachment to her was so great that she spent many whole nights with her, either standing by her cradle or lying on the carpet at its foot.

Marie-Anne made ample return for the continual care which her weak health required. She was her father's delight, and indeed became his child of predilection. "This fourth daughter," he says, "upon whom I might have been tempted to look askance, I love . . . tenderly.

Her little face is dear to me; her smile cheers my heart, and I feel like dancing her on my knee from morning till night. My first children I must not have either seen or noticed sufficiently. They must have been as promising as Marie-Anne, and yet I seem not to have realized it. For what mysterious purpose has God been pleased to make this fourth child the dearest of all?"

God's design, no doubt, was that in this child, whose years were to be so few and whose home life so short, should be centered a multitude of joys, of tendernesses, of sweet memories, such as cluster about most lives only after a long course of years. From her life came naught but happiness to her family. Never was any difficulty experienced in respect to her, or divergence of views, or any disquietude, save on the score of her weak health.

Before she was two years of age she was the sunshine of the house; "the little elf whom every one loves and in whom every one finds amusement." Her curious little face had quite a charm of its own. Her habits and movements resembled those of a bird. She pecked at her food rather than ate it, and lived on the backs and rungs of chairs. She was always somewhere aboveground.

She was familiarly known in the house as "Nanane," a name that clung to her all her life. Her father, when his mind was burdened,—and that was rather often, as he was the head of a fairly large family and was not overwealthy,—would go upstairs to play with his "Nanane." The child at a very early age would give expression, in a dainty and amusing dialect of her own, to passing fancies, which were vivid and glowing and even poetical. Her inner disposition, as shown in her exterior bearing, was gentle, facile and cheerful.

As she grew up she retained the peculiar position in the family group to which her early grace and tenderness had entitled her. Though followed at intervals of years, first by another sister, Yvonne, destined like herself to the religious state, and then in succession by a brother, another sister, and finally by a second brother, "Nanane," who occupied the middle place in this long line of children, did not pass unnoticed. When she became older she was fond of saying, "I am the senior of the second group and the Benjamin of the first." And indeed her elder sisters felt they must be exceptionally tender with her, owing to her delicacy in infancy; and yet those who came after her, the last of whom got to know so little of her, received at her hands all those little services which are generally rendered by the eldest sister. She had also a first cousin, the son of her mother's brother, who was born two days before herself, on which account she had a particular affection for him. Her attachment to him was not diminished by lapse of time, and although their paths in life finally diverged, their union and mutual confidence remained the same.

When she was three years of age her mother's health necessitated a somewhat long stay at the seashore. It was quite a treat to the five little ones to accompany her, and the new spectacle of the sea opened to the rising intelligence of Marie-Anne horizons as yet unknown. She was learning to speak with some fluency, though inventing names of things, when necessary, by the aid of her inexhaustible imagination. Running about on the sand the whole day long, small and graceful in her little blue toggery (which she wore a long time, as she was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin), always with a crumpled

nosegay in her hand and her hair blowing into her eyes, she made a thousand reflections, fresh and charming.

Her heart was very tender and easily moved. Of this a hundred illustrations might be given. As she was very timorous, a single severe word sufficed to correct any of her childish defects. There was little need of punishing her. At the first word of blame she would burst into tears and had to be comforted. She had an irresistible way of asking for anything that pleased her.

> "Mamma, when do you go to Tours?"
> "To-morrow, dear."
> "What's 'to-morrow'?"
> "It is . . . it is after you have slept. Must I take Nanane?"
> "Oh, yes! yes! dear Mamma! pretty, loving Mamma!"

What mother could have the heart to refuse?

Pious, even then, she had a tender love for the Blessed Virgin.

> "Marie-Anne, why are you climbing up the bureau?"
> "Mamma, I'd like to put my arms around the Blessed Virgin. . . . Oh, poor Blessed Virgin! If her feet were not glued I'd make her a pair of socks."

It was at this period that she began to learn to read and write, whilst her mother taught her the elements of sacred history and of the catechism. These she easily mastered, and sometimes after a lesson she would repeat it to her father with the greatest confidence.

Little by little, after much suffering, after many sleepless nights, after many a spell of sickness, followed by a long and lingering convalescence, her health began at last to acquire some stability. She was now strong enough to work regularly each day under the governess who had her elder sisters in charge, and soon advanced beyond the usual course of instruction given to children of her age. But her heart was being educated as well as her mind, and its vivid and tender emotions often expressed themselves in words. M. Hervé-Bazin was almost continually away from home, summoned as he was by his friends throughout one half of France, to defend in public the cause of God, or of Catholic works of zeal, or of the King.[1] He never refused these services, though they were a drain upon his purse; but Marie-Anne, to whom at that time his continual absence meant only the pain of separation, might be heard saying to one of her sisters: "Isn't it awful to have a papa who is a *conférencier?* He is always going away." This was the only thing that marred the happiness of this united Christian family, where the children grouped themselves around father and mother as the center and source of their peace and joy.

During the winter season they lived in Angers, but when the Easter vacation came around they would fill a huge van with luggage and set out, one and all, for Le Patys, to remain there till All Saints. It was the finest of holidays for these children to arrive in the country at the opening of spring. Jumping from the carriage, they would scatter over the lawns and up and down the paths, looking for the first violets of the year or admiring the first buds that had appeared. They would run

[1] The family was royalist.

to the courtyard, to the garden, to the river, to the huts built of branches which they had left behind them in the autumn, chirping, meanwhile, like the birds on their return for the season, and coming back for the evening meal beside themselves with joy, each with his own little tale to tell.

Those who have not tasted in their childhood of this healthy and bracing life of the country will have little idea of the enthusiasm which it engenders in the hearts of the young. One must have had this experience to realize what it is for a child to witness the great awakening of nature, to hear the first trill of the blackbird, to watch for the first budding of the flowers, to spend hours of solitude, bathed in pure light and air, in silence and repose. Happy the children who have been formed in such a school. They will possess, their whole life through, a power and vigor of emotion for whose absence nothing could atone. It is no less true that in these blessed hours God speaks to the soul, revealing Himself to it in the beauty of the things He has created, and with such clearness in the case of the pure that the impression made is never lost. The keen and impressionable nature of Marie-Anne easily lent itself to such enthusiasm. Indeed it carried her beyond all reasonable bounds; for the greatest defect of her early childhood was an excessive fondness for a solitude in which she could dream away the day. No sooner did she find herself unobserved than she would run off and hide; and later she would be found sitting on a stile with her eyes fixed on the horizon, or perhaps nestling under an oak and listening with intense interest to the nightingales or the warblers. She was scolded, she was punished,—for on this point she was incorrigible,—she was watched with extra care, but it was

all to little purpose: she seemed quite incapable of resisting this temptation.

She would sometimes take her cousin René into her counsels, and the two together would build a little chapel of moss in one of the bushes. They would then kneel down and recite the rosary. If any one came across them, they would blush as if detected in a fault, and would then tell their little story.

> "But how do you manage? you have only one pair of beads between you."
>
> "Oh, each one takes hold of an end. It's good it's broken—it's so very convenient."

At the age of seven, on the 2d day of July, 1884, Marie-Anne made her first confession. The event deeply affected her. She seemed so much troubled when her mother brought her to the good curé of Marans that the latter, on taking her by the hand, exclaimed, "The child is burning, as if she had a fever." The tendency of this impressionability, which remained with her all her life, was to exhaust her physical forces. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration that her interior life was so intense that it wore out the feeble frame which it inhabited.

She was now growing into girlhood, and in a few short years reached the age at which it is customary in the diocese of Angers to admit children to their first communion. She was scarcely ten years of age when she received her God for the first time. During the entire previous year her efforts were unremitting to correct the slight faults begotten of her ardent nature. To effect this, she employed the one great means which is the making of saints, namely, prayer. Her exercises of prayer

became daily longer, more fervent and more interior. To prayer were added a simplicity and a modesty that were quite charming. One night, as she was going asleep with the customary hymn, *Le Grand Jour approche,*[1] tucked under her pillow, her governess came to her bedside and Marie-Anne said to her with tears in her eyes: "Mademoiselle, you must think me too bad to make my first communion." "But, my dear child, you are going to mend your faults." "Ah! yes . . . but listen! here's what I am going to do: every morning I am going to take just one defect and fight against it all day long; because if I take them all at once I shall never succeed."

These are the words of a child, but they reveal all the strength of purpose as well as the fervor and the habit of order which were to bear such fruits of holiness in her soul. Hers was indeed a strong character under a gracious and timorous exterior. Throughout her life, whether in the midst of her family or surrounded by her sisters in religion, she kept the even tenor of her way, without friction, yet without deviating to right or left. Whatever she meant to do she accomplished, without fail and with no exception, till finally the day arrived when she was given a glimpse of the supreme sacrifice required of her, which without more ado she accepted. Even now in her childhood there were tokens of that future strength of character concealed beneath a charming exterior. She possessed the gift of self-recollection. Those who saw her were forcibly struck by it during the retreat she made before her first communion; her mother in particular, who wrote as follows in the family journal:—

[1] The Great Day draws nigh.

Marie-Anne is going to make her first communion to-morrow. She is making the retreat at the convent. Every morning she leaves home at seven, accompanied by her sisters and Mlle. Ziegler, and carrying her little basket. She does not return before six in the evening. Her countenance is calm and joyous and radiant with interior peace. Last evening, as we were all walking in the garden, I noticed that she stepped aside into a bypath and opened her book of canticles, which she had brought with her, and then we heard her child's voice raised in hymns which must have been pleasing to the good God. It was delightful to see her air of recollection as she walked with bowed head and sang. Yvonne was looking on, and the example set her was a good one. On returning to the house and after prayers in the chapel in honor of the Sacred Heart, her father took her upon his knee and gave her a pious exhortation. He recommended her to pray for father's and mother's health, and above all that they might never offend the good God. He bade her also pray for our deceased relations, and last of all for a special favor which papa and mamma desired (the birth of little Michel, who is to come into the world in a little while). Jacques, from under the bedclothes, raised his head with its fine intelligent pair of eyes and listened; and meanwhile I was asking myself for which I should bless God the more, the father or the children.

And on the following day, June 5, 1887:—

Our dear Marie-Anne has made her first communion,—a good and holy first communion.

> She looked like a little angel. She was so calm, so joyous, so little occupied with herself or with her dress, that one could not imagine her better. With what simple recollection she returned to her place. How God must be pleased with the prayers of these little ones. On entering at vespers she thought, as she told us, "Oh, how I should like to be at the Assumption and be allowed to begin over again!" On hearing the bell for night-prayers she burst into tears. "What is the matter, Marie-Anne?"—"Oh! Mademoiselle, I shall never hear the bell sound again without remembering what I felt when I heard the bell ring for Mass this morning. Ah! how sad it is to think the day is over!"

The nuns had told her to promise something to God, and her promise was to say the rosary every day and never to lie down at night with a mortal sin on her conscience. What graces her soul may have received on this memorable occasion can only be conjectured. Those who were present saw in her a tiny brunette, apparently very delicate, but with limpid eyes that shone with a supernatural luster. As she sat there in the beautiful church of Marans, simple in manner, pale as the muslin of which her dress was made, not in the least distracted by the gaze of curious onlookers, listening to the discourse, more pious than eloquent, of the good curé of the parish, the grace of God found no obstacle in her heart and took possession of it forever. Marie-Anne, like many another, saw in her first communion the origin of her vocation. The thought of it may not have been distinctly before her mind, but a heavenly germ had been planted in her heart which was to grow and increase unceasingly.

Chapter 2

As God wished to finish betimes in this choice soul the work which He does more slowly in the souls of others, He did not long permit the childhood of Marie-Anne to be one of unalloyed happiness. A crushing misfortune—one of those catastrophes that rend human hearts and blast human lives—was about to alight upon the house which was the center of so much happiness. On the 8th of January, 1889, God suddenly called to Himself M. Hervé-Bazin!

Those who lived in Angers at the time will remember the outburst of sorrow that greeted the announcement of this misfortune. In places distant from Angers it was the same, and messages of condolence came by the hundred to the house of mourning. Even to-day, after the lapse of so many years, neither the man nor the writer is forgotten; and if any of the readers of this biography should desire to know the father, whom the daughter resembled in so many respects, we refer them to the fervid memoir in which M. René Bazin has lent his pen to the service of his heart and of his dearest memories.[1]

What, then, what must have been the effect of this sudden and unexpected death on the family of the departed. Totally unprepared for the terrible shock, the children could but cluster about their mother, more crushed by the blow than they, and mingle their tears

[1] *Un homme d'œuvres,* Ferdinand-Jacques Hervé-Bazin. Tours, Alfred Mame et Cie.

with hers. Hitherto the family had been so united and so happy; no untoward event had disturbed this dovecot, guarded by so exquisite a conjugal affection; but in a few short hours all was changed. Grief, so long kept at bay, was to be seated forever at this fireside, whose presiding spirit was gone. The years were to come, one after another, bringing with them peace, indeed, which is inseparable from the Christian life, but happiness never more. This day of sorrow, come upon them as lightning which cleaves the heavens to their depths, left deep scars upon all their lives. In degrees varying with their ages the children of M. Hervé-Bazin were deeply affected. For the elder children their youth was at an end, as they saw themselves face to face with the sad realities of life. The younger children—Michel was scarcely a year old—were for the first time conscious of that peculiar melancholy and sense of a void which cannot be described but which orphaned children know only too well.

As to Marie-Anne, who was then twelve years of age and had always had a place of her own in her father's affections, sorrow had entered too deeply into her soul ever to be dislodged. From this time forward we discover everywhere, in her letters, in her prayers, in her souvenirs, the name of him who had passed away. To her it was a sort of cult, and she was happy to be the first to respond to a wish so often expressed by her father, that some of his children should consecrate themselves to God. Later on, when a malady which she soon came to believe was incurable brought her within sight of death, it was one of her joys to think that she would be the first to rejoin him in heaven. Meanwhile, under the influence of this misfortune, her soul was advancing

more rapidly to maturity. She observed so much suffering around her, and saw so close to her, in such countless detail, the affliction caused by so violent a rupture of family ties, that the impression it produced upon her sensitive nature never afterwards left her. She learned to understand, too, that such happiness as earth can afford is but a fleeting thing. Here we discern one of the means, more general in its influence but none the less effectual, by which God was drawing her to Himself as the one object of her love.

This truth He made still clearer to her when in the midst of this period of desolation she had to prepare herself to receive confirmation. It is customary in the country districts for the children, every two or three years, to go from their own to some neighboring parish to take advantage of the presence there of the bishop; and, accordingly, Marie-Anne was brought to Gené, a little distance from Marans, on the 10th of May, 1889. If on this day she felt more painfully than usual the void left by her father, she doubtless felt also the action of the Divine Spirit who descended upon her and set her apart as His spouse.

We unfortunately possess no words of hers on this event. She was in the habit of writing down her thoughts and aspirations in a notebook, which she took with her to the novitiate; but toward the end of her life, in a moment of exceptional fervor, she destroyed these memoranda, which would have been so precious to us. We have scarcely anything bearing on her innermost life, —nothing, in fact, except a few pages either left in her mother's keeping or discovered among her papers. We can only turn to the recollections of those who lived with her during the years of her girlhood, who noticed the

steady progress she was making under the influence of misfortune and of the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Yvonne made her first communion at about this time, and Marie-Anne, who had a sort of intuition that her sister and herself would follow the same path in life, began to interest herself a little in the soul of Yvonne.

Her superior natural endowments came to the surface in all matters, and, although she was only fourth in point of age, she was far from being the last in point of influence. Her hours were never dull, although she was often alone, for she had had from childhood that fondness for solitude which is so familiar to the saints and to those who resemble them. She peopled the solitude with her thoughts and filled it with an atmosphere derived from her own heart and her own spirit. Timid to excess, she nevertheless possessed initiative and did courageously whatever she had resolved to do. Her manner had that charm, with a tincture of gravity in it, which betokens a strong interior life. She spoke little, but what she said was very apt and full of meaning. Her feelings were easily awakened, and they quickly expressed themselves in her mobile features. She blushed at the merest trifles.

Work came easy to her and aroused her enthusiasm, especially work in the line of art, painting, music, and the like. She studied English, and when her brothers were old enough to begin Latin, she began it with them. She attained to some proficiency in the language of the Church. From the first, her study of Latin was an act of piety and was intended as a preparation for the religious life. In after years she never ceased blessing God for her opportunities in regard to the study of Latin. "I am so happy," she said, "to understand the offices, the psalms, the lessons; for many recite them without know-

ing the meaning, stopping or running on with no idea of the sense. How good God has been in enabling me to do better." Latin had such a relish for her that she often used it in preference to French in writing down a pious thought in her notebook or on a picture. Hers was indeed a clear and penetrating intelligence which was not content with skimming the surface of things.

On the other hand, she had no liking for needlework and was not skilled in it. She did not seriously apply herself to it till she had entered the convent, and even then only from a virtuous motive.

An accident which nearly cost her her life showed both the Christian spirit and the presence of mind of Marie-Anne at that age. One day, at Le Patys, when she was taking a walk with her mother and her sisters and had come to a bridge in the park, she leaned over the hand-rail of the bridge and remained there a few moments after the others had passed on. The water must have fascinated her, as sometimes will happen, for, all of a sudden and without knowing how, she fell forward. The stream was deep, and she did not know how to swim. Her first thought was to call upon Saint Joseph; her second was to keep her hands in motion and thus support herself as best she could. In a little while, though she was never afterward able to account for it, she felt her fingers touching the roots of some alder trees that skirted the brook, and by clinging to these she got to the shore. Dripping from head to foot, she ran to her mother and her sisters, who were frightened to see her in such a plight, not having heard a sound. The worst thing about it, however, was the awful dread of what *might* have happened; but Marie-Anne ever after had the conviction that a sort of miracle had been wrought in her favor.

While two years of mourning went by, her interior life was developing. Her health was rapidly improving, and she had now no need of exceptional or delicate treatment. She profited by the change to work the harder, to make some attempts at mortification—among other things lengthening her time for prayer, which she spent upon her knees in the chapel at Le Patys—and to labor harder in controlling her feelings, for she was not as yet quite even-tempered. Her defects were not spared in so large a family, but she submitted to the discipline in all humility.

Thus was she prepared for the advent of 1891, which marked a turning-point in her life. From the beginning of the year the marriage of her eldest sister was in prospect, and it took place in April. The separation was a painful one to a heart so affectionate as hers, and she felt it for a considerable time. For a second time it brought home to her the imperfection of all earthly happiness; so much so that her soul now felt it must take its flight. Only a little while after we find evidence of the great act which set her apart from the world and determined her course in life once and for all.

On the 28th of June, 1891, with the approval of her director but without a word on the subject to any one else, Marie-Anne made a vow to consecrate herself to God. She was then a little past her fourteenth year.

The formula of this vow we discovered among her papers after her death. It runs as follows:—

> Jesus, I love Thee, I adore Thee, I neither seek nor desire aught but Thee: Thou art my all. In order to be more entirely thine, to belong to Thee alone, to love Thee with entire

freedom, my beloved Jesus, I hereby vow never to unite myself to any one but Thee. I promise never to espouse any one but Thee, to have no other love but thine. Come, then, my Beloved One, and take possession of my heart, which gives itself to Thee entirely and forever. I ask nothing in return but an infinite love for Thee, my Spouse, and a most intimate union with thy divine Heart.

Give me a sincere sorrow for my past sins and such dread of sin as shall deter me from ever committing it. May I henceforth be able to offer Thee a purity without blemish, joined to an ardent love. May I consecrate my life to making Thee known and loved, for the greater good of my soul.

Dispose of me for the present as an instrument ready to accomplish all thy desires. I am no longer mine, but thine and only thine.

My divine Spouse, thanks! thanks! Oh, yes, I belong only to Thee, now and for all eternity! Amen.

MARIE-ANNE OF JESUS,
28th of June, 1891.

Let those who are astonished at this engagement at her age turn to the lives of saints who have died young. Nearly all of them have shown the same haste thus to unite themselves with their Lord. They seem to be urged by a divine impulse to advance quickly in the spirit because their journey in the flesh is to be a short one. They heap up merits with a feverish devotion; no one can stop them in their onward course; indeed, no one thinks for one moment of doing so in the case of souls who shed about them so heavenly an atmosphere: they

are "marked with God's own seal." The act which Marie-Anne had performed in secret was the natural result of the fixed direction which her thoughts had taken and of her efforts to sustain it. God, in creating her, reserved her for Himself. And this He gave her to understand, little by little, in proportion as her mind opened and expanded under the breath of divine grace. He would have her for Himself, and have her quickly, for His designs in such cases are inscrutable to us. Simply and unresistingly this child had yielded to the divine impulse. She had answered the call which she had heard, and when, with a premature ripeness of soul, she offered herself to her Lord, who was awaiting the offering, she received as a reward of her fidelity the special graces which were to be her soul's portion forever.

The first of these graces proved to be a great pliancy under the hand of God and a profound love of His holy will. Witness the following prayer, composed by her in this same year 1891:—

> My God, Thou hast given me a father and a mother who have loved Thee and who have brought me up in thy love. Thou hast taken back my father: may thy holy will be done.
>
> My God, Thou hast given me brothers and sisters whom I love. If it is thy will to take them, my God, may thy holy will be done.
>
> My God, Thou hast given me a body and a soul wherewith to serve Thee and to love Thee: if Thou wilt take them back, may thy holy will be done.
>
> My God, Thou hast given me a heart, intelligence, understanding, consciousness, reason: take them, may thy holy will be done.

My God, Thou didst give me liberty for my guidance in the world. Thou hast taken it back: may thy will be done.

My God, Thou hast given me my life: Thou canst take it back: may thy will be done.

My God, Thou hast heaped graces upon me; Thou hast given me *all:* I bless Thee, O my God, and I love Thee.

Thy will be done.

Here, at the very beginning of her consecration to God, we discern the dominant and permanent element of her interior life in its constant progress toward perfection. It consisted in an entire self-abandonment which was to know neither limit nor reservation; an abandonment mingled with gratitude for benefits often thought over and acknowledged; an abandonment of love in one who regarded herself as belonging henceforth only to Jesus.

Notwithstanding her reticence, her vocation began to be noised abroad. Those who noticed her air of recollection and the generous and constant efforts she was making to overcome self, and observed at the same time how her thoughts and tastes were turning more and more toward the things of heaven could not help perceiving that God was reserving her for Himself. This was the feeling of all who knew her at the time, although she had said nothing on the subject herself.

Such silence, however, she could not long maintain with Mme. Hervé-Bazin. It was due to the heart of the mother as well as to the heart of the daughter that such secrecy should not be of long continuance. And yet she felt embarrassed, as others like her have felt in the same situation; for it requires an effort, and a painful one, to divulge the mysteries of divine union, and then, too, the

pain one is about to inflict on others, notwithstanding their faith and spirit of sacrifice, tends to seal the lips and make confidences impossible. Marie-Anne suffered much from this embarrassment and was unable to make up her mind to speak. At last, however, ashamed of her long delay, she decided to write instead of speaking. The letter, which we shall give in its entirety, follows:—

Sunday, 15th of May, 1892.

My dear, dear Mamma, I have decided at last to tell you in writing what I could never have told you by word of mouth but which you would inevitably see in my journal; but I have found this a very indirect means, and I prefer simply to tell you all.

The good Master has called me. I had for a long time heard his voice without responding to it; but the call becoming more urgent, on the 28th of June last I bound myself by vow to belong to Him alone.

Oh, what sweetness I felt in renouncing my own will for that of our Lord! And what a multitude of interior graces He has given me from that moment to this! I know how ill I have corresponded to them. I know that my dispositions have not changed as they should have and that I have made but little progress since that blessed day; but I do not despair, with the aid of divine grace, of becoming a little more worthy of Him.

Need I tell you, dear Mamma, that this vow is my one great happiness, that I think of it without ceasing, and that I am continually thanking our Lord for having asked it of me and for not thinking me unworthy to make it?

I am sure you understand me. You will help me to thank God for this immense blessing.

My only fear is that you will wonder, now more than ever, why I do not strive to perfect myself and why my dispositions do not improve, notwithstanding this greatest of graces. This is what I have often asked myself during these days. I have felt so ashamed of my sloth and my want of love. Jesus has many a time reproached me and yet I have remained the same. . . .

Mamma, now that you know all, you will help me, won't you? We shall work together and I shall sanctify myself for the Divine Master. What a joy it will be when He bids me come still closer to Him and when I shall unite myself to Him forever! . . .

I beg my dear father to bless me; and from you, dear Mamma, I also beg a blessing. I hope and feel sure that both you and he will approve. I have already the approval of Père X, who has shown me how much the good God loves me in calling me thus and how much I should love Him in return.

Pray for me that I may accomplish his holy will in all things, in order that I may unite myself completely to Him.

MARIE-ANNE.

The letter reflects the deep joy of her heart, her simple humility and an unwavering certitude. Mme. Hervé-Bazin was no less certain of her daughter's vocation. She accepted it as Marie-Anne had wished, with love and gratitude; but she also accepted it as mothers are wont to do, who weep for themselves but rejoice for their children's sake.

Chapter 3

Her path now lay clear before her and there was no exterior obstacle to prevent her advance. She had reached her fifteenth year, she had been affianced to her Lord, her confessor had given his approval, her mother had given encouragement, and she had only to await the hour when she should begin her life of heavenly union within the walls of a convent. Few vocations have been as certain as hers and fewer still have been so free from obstacles. Consequently her progress in the spirit was at once easy and rapid. Only later in her life was she called to share the cross of Him whom she loved.

She was now to spend three years longer in the world before entering the novitiate. During this period, whilst continuing her studies, she applied herself to the more important task of making herself worthy of the grace of her vocation. A few notes of hers will enable us to get glimpses of her interior life and observe the work that was there in progress. We shall also make use of some fragments of letters written to her family and to a friend who was very dear to her. The latter, Mlle. de ———, was her confidante and virtually an elder sister. She justified in all respects the confidence and affection of Marie-Anne, over whom she exercised no little influence. The following prayer, which must have been often recited, as the paper on which it is written bears evidence, will show how Marie-Anne viewed this friendship and how she appreciated it.

My God, even the smallest of thy favors should fill us with gratitude. And is it not a great favor to have received from Thee a friend so tenderly loved, whose counsels and example lead me to Thee? I thank Thee, my God. If I have not sufficiently recognized this grace, show me my faults and permit me to thank Thee down to the last day of my life for the good that has been done me by this elder sister whom Thou hast given me. My one prayer for her, my Jesus, is this, that she may love Thee without stint and above all things,—a prayer inspired by the affection that unites us. Oh, grant that we may be able to say when we are together, "The Divine Master is in our company—we feel it, He is directing us, we are his alone!" Make this dear friend of mine most happy here below,—not with that worldly happiness which I do not desire for myself and which, consequently, I cannot ask for her, but with the pure and holy happiness which springs from thy love. Mayest Thou reunite us one day in heaven. Having loved one another on earth, may we love each other above, in Thee and forever. Amen.

It is much to be desired that all friendships should resemble this one. Their intimacy had its origin in a work of zeal conducted by some girls who assembled on Thursdays to teach the catechism to children of their own sex from the public schools. Marie-Anne's sisters had a share in the work, and she aspired to no less herself. She writes to her friend:—

So all promises well for the work in behalf of the children. What a happiness! How good

> our Lord is to take in hand the interests of those who seek to make Him known and loved! How I should like to join you in order to try, in proportion to my strength, to do a little good to those poor little children, who are so ignorant and so abandoned. When shall I begin?

In the following lines, written a few days later, we have some confidences in which we hear a cry of the heart.

> Let us pray hard to Saint Teresa, the great victim of the love of Jesus Christ, that she may obtain for us a little of the love that consumed her. . . . Pray also for me. . . . The work of my perfection seems so long and so hard! I almost feel at times like giving up when it is scarcely begun.

She did not give it up, however; quite the contrary, for we find under date of July 12, 1892, the following notes under the heading of

A Crown of Thorns

> I will apply myself to every irksome task, especially of the practical order.
>
> I will never indulge in immoderate eating or drinking, and as far as possible I will not eat between meals,—avoiding, however, anything singular.
>
> I will be more amiable and never allow myself to utter an ill-humored or sharp word.
>
> I will say my prayers, when possible, on my knees or in some uncomfortable position.

I will accept humiliations *joyfully,* in union with the Divine Master.

I will practice some secret mortifications, of a kind that will make me really suffer a little.

I will never let slip a chance of saying a kind word or repress a smile that may give pleasure to others.

I will be patient with persons who tire me and cross me, and to these more than to others I will always be ready to do a good turn.

I will never complain, even with a smiling face, of anything I may have to suffer.

I will not speak of myself.

These resolves were the object of her constant endeavors; but any one who has attempted to practice them knows how much real virtue goes to the formation of such habits and how long a time it takes to become perfect in them. In the process of acquiring them, Marie-Anne had sometimes to contend with discouragement. She did everything in her power to dispel this feeling; but there was never any outward sign of the struggle she was often obliged to maintain within. It was in the best of good humor and in a finely animated style that she wrote the following letters to her sisters and her mother when they were away from home:—

Le Patys, July 27, 1892.

. . . You must pray hard to Our Lady of Victories for both of us *ut simus sanctæ corpore et spiritu—ut sim, ut sis sancta.*[1] There is no other real good. Can you understand how people who do not believe in God manage to accept

[1] That we may be holy in body and in spirit—that I, that you, may be holy.

their sufferings? For they, too, have their sufferings. To me it is incomprehensible; but how I pity them!

My dear Mamma, such grand news came yesterday! We are just beside ourselves with joy. It came the very day on which we finished the novena. Isn't it splendid! How truly good the good God is![1] And we, instead of letting ourselves be guided—carried—by the sweet providence of God and abandoning ourselves without reserve to his holy will, we are taken up with our own ideas and human plans of our own, which God, of course, sees to be badly formed. Then we lose heart because nothing that we have desired has come to pass. Meanwhile God is lavishing upon us gifts much better than those we have asked and adjusting our affairs a thousand times better than we could have done it ourselves. . . . Isn't it wonderful! Let us give thanks! Yes, thanksgiving and prayer!

Le Patys, July 12, 1892.

My dear, what a happiness it will be to see you again! What fine chats we shall have! The partition between our rooms will be in danger. I shall feel very much like giving it the discipline by pounding on it.

What great faith they have at Marans! Yesterday, as I have been telling Mamma, there was a long procession to the Croix-Rabault to obtain rain. In the afternoon Gabrielle went to see good Mrs. Chaussée, who said to her: "Oh! *I* have not watered my celery!—of course I haven't."—"But why not?"—"Wouldn't that

[1] French Catholics say "the good God" where we simply say "God."

be losing trust in the good God? Even if it withered up I would not water it. The good God has taken charge of that." Isn't that beautiful! In the evening, after the fairest of days, under a real Italian sky, big clouds began to pile up in the west, the weather vane turned, and at ten the rain began to fall. Then there was the roar of the storm and a great downpour was the answer of the good God to prayer. Each farmhouse had sent representatives to the procession, not only at Marans but also at Gené and other neighboring places.

She would sometimes note down in the evening, on sheets of paper hastily stitched together with a single thread, a résumé of the whole day. This enabled her to keep an eye on the state of her soul. We shall give here some extracts from this series of notes.

Le Patys, October 10, 1892.

The Heart of Jesus is the most delightful of dwelling-places. In order to keep us there our dear Saviour has left nothing undone, and the more we like it the more He embellishes it.

October 11.

There are days when I am almost tempted to throw everthing out of the window and go lie down,—days on which I am so slack and sluggish that I feel like crushing myself. These would be the best of days for taking the discipline.

October 12.

How dismal it is on a rainy day in the country! One feels almost like crying, and God seems not so near as in the sunshine. A preacher

used to say: "There are women who keep in excellent good humor when the weather is fine: they sing, they laugh, they are so amiable . . . but on a rainy day . . .!" Am I not one of these?

Yet in spite of all, my communion days are always better, because the whole day long I feel as if our Lord were within me, and I enter into myself with more pleasure. But there are still so many things to be amended.

October 14.

My heart is as cold as the stable of Bethlehem; yes, colder, barer. I must get Mary to enter it, and with her the angels, in order that my dear Jesus may not find Himself too much alone. And I, like the ox and the ass, will warm Him with my breath. Would that I could melt the ice of atheism and skepticism which saddens the Heart of Jesus!

October 25.

God's immensity fills the universe, and yet how small a space He occupies in the workshop at Nazareth. How I love to adore Him there, in his humble dwelling, working or talking with Mary! How delicious must have been the conversations of Jesus and Mary!

October 26.

How difficult a thing it is never to say a word that is not absolutely charitable! It is a great virtue and one that I have often admired in others. The habit of speaking well of all, often at one's own expense, is a beautiful trait. How charitable must have been the conversations of Jesus and Mary.

October 28.

How delicious the Eucharistic union! How good, how beautiful, how grand! God could not have done more, and only He could have done as much. The quarter-of-an-hour's thanksgiving after communion is a little of heaven on this earth, a ray of light from out eternal life, a drop of heavenly bliss in this ocean of sadness!

October 30.

"I am the cross of Jesus," Xaverine de Maistre used to say. And I? I would be a Simon of Cyrene, my dear Jesus, but not to aid You, under constraint, but out of love and in a spirit of submission to all that happens to me according to your good pleasure. Let me be the Cyrenean, or a Veronica, or a Magdalen, but never your cross, never, never!

October 31.

If I were not continually undoing the work of Jesus in my soul, how holy I should be!

November 5.

Oh, how delicious the moments immediately following the coming of Jesus into our souls! What sweet commerce we hold with Him! How charming his words! *In aure melos, in labiis mel, in corde voces!* [1]

Not unfrequently her soul was lifted up to God by natural sights and sounds. We have already seen how sensitive she was to the beauties of nature. The following extract will show how completely they could captivate her. At the same time it will exhibit in its truest type

[1] Music to the ear, honey to the lips, sweet words to the heart.

the kind of feeling that should possess the souls of all men in presence of the splendors of God's creation.

November 7, 1892.

This morning I was on my way to the garden to get some roses. The hoarfrost had been thick on the ground during the night. The whole landscape was brilliant and seemed to be a mass of silver, owing to the heavy dews. The leaves seemed to be covered with pearls and the roses to be thickly studded with them. A thin vapor was arising in all directions. In the background of the picture was the herd of white oxen, plodding along slowly and peacefully, with the farmer in their wake, who whistled as he drove them to water. The river was brilliant under the sun's rays and reflected the tall trees with their bare branches. Under their last lingering leaves a bird sent forth into the pure morning air a farewell trill. . . . And I, as I gazed upon the scene, felt as if rapt to the very skies . . . and I asked myself if I was worthy to behold such a spectacle; but my soul was filled with such enthusiasm that it was carried quite out of itself in a hymn to its God. What will heaven be if the earth, fair as it is, is only a place of exile? Oh, my God, how good Thou art! Why should I not love Thee?

November 8.

This morning, after communion, I should willingly have died. And it seems to me it would have been a happy departure for me. There seemed to be so little to fear in death. Whatever Jesus wishes. If I am to live, I am willing, provided He is always with me.

November 9.

I love God and I do nothing for Him! Does He believe in my love? Love is proved only by deeds.

November 19.

Jesus was in his tabernacle, hidden, but very visible to the soul that sought Him. The church was in gloom, and only the little gilded door was lit up by the rays of the lamp, the faithful guardian of the hidden God. How really my Jesus was there! How I *felt* his presence! I kissed the cross on my little ring and said to Him: "My Beloved One, whatever Thou willest. I ask for nothing and accept all. I am thy little fiancée. . . ." Oh, that name, that dear name of fiancée. Jesus seemed to repeat it to me and to be asking me to love Him in such wise that on the day on which we shall celebrate our nuptials, so much desired, I shall bring Him a heart that has no pulsation but for Him, a soul that is set on fire by the mention of his name.

November 29.

Jesus, my Beloved! All things may lie in ruins about me, all ties may be broken for me, all my affections extinguished, all my happiness gone, whilst the whole world is against me, but I shall possess Jesus, my Beloved One!

The world may hate me and rage against me: it can deprive me of everything save Jesus my Beloved!

Though I should be killed and my body torn in shreds, my soul would still rest in Thee, my Beloved.

Ah, what a great good it is to feel but a little love! I have been so destitute of it for some

time. It is the wine that gives me courage for the struggle and strength to go forward. Nothing but love can reanimate my poor soul, which, alas! is so weak and sluggish!

On the 8th of January, a date which had such painful associations for her, she wrote but a word or two, but they spoke volumes:

Lord, the more You smite me the more shall I bless You. You wish to detach my soul: break, destroy all, but let me be yours alone.

This short series of notes ends with the following paragraphs:

January 31, 1893.

Jesus—oh, how great a name is that of Jesus! It contains all: Brother, Spouse, Friend, Consoler, Support, Hope. . . . It animates all; what good deed will it fail to inspire? It purifies all: everything [1] is holy if done for Jesus. It consoles for all: in every trial do we not see Jesus? It embalms all: oh, how fair and sweet and agreeable is everything when one sees Jesus in it!

Jesus, my Beloved, I love You above all things, and if I love You it is because You are Jesus. Oh, that I could be an image of Jesus, thereby to animate, console, purify, embalm, as He does! . . .

It is plain from the above lines that Marie-Anne was leading a fervidly supernatural life. In the family circle

[1] "Everything" does not, of course, include actions unworthy in themselves.

this was perceptible only in her constant and generous efforts at improvement, in her cheerful manner, which was often meritorious, though it seemed but natural, and in the calm which possessed her soul and radiated from her person without any thought of it on her part. During a somewhat long absence of Mme. Hervé-Bazin from Le Patys, which was occasioned by her going to assist her eldest daughter at the birth of her first child, Marie-Anne wrote daily both to mother and sister. The following extracts from these letters will tell her story at this period better than any words of ours:

June 7, 1892.

So you are going to rob us of Mamma and leave us to our unhappy lot! Your dear little one will owe us an eternal debt of gratitude. We are recommended to all the Saints of Paradise and to all the just on earth, who will often come to watch over us, as I hope. We shall not be lost in the midst of this fine country, especially if we are in the keeping of the good God, as we shall be.

We went to Mass this morning and Michel was as good as a future Capuchin. And yet the ceremonies were long, owing to the *Lauda Sion's* being sung in Marans fashion. Although the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament is a double of the first class, M. le Curé did not honor us with Dumont's *Credo,* which I missed exceedingly. Last evening we were saying among ourselves that you were all snugly assembled around the family board, that M. l'abbé was having quite a feast with the ———s, and that *we* could just as easily have a little junketing of our own; and without more ado Gabrielle

opened a jar of brandied cherries and—I need not tell you the rest! We all cried out with one accord: "Oh, but the day of Bernard's birth! What fine ones we shall have then!"

Now, above all things, let dear little Mamma's mind be at rest on our account. We are all very well, we get on well together, the children are obedient enough, and the fifth hasty-pudding which Gabrielle gave us last evening disappeared like magic. You see, we are resting quietly in the arms of the good God.

June 28, 1892.

My Very Dear Mamma:

Your letters give us immense pleasure. It is so good of you to write so often to both of us. It is this that makes each day's happiness. In yesterday's letter you ask me to tell you something in detail about my dispositions. As I have already said, Mamma dear, I feel my defects less than usual, because I have not many difficulties to encounter in living here with our good Gabrielle. But if I must tell you the real truth, I feel a bit disquieted about the return of X; and this solely because I find it hard to keep my composure when he sketches my character; but in reality I like him much. On the other hand, I should not be sorry to have to beat my face in punishment of my pride and my susceptibility. This time of solitude, as you have reminded me, is something of a retreat—a truce, a rest, an armistice, during which I am to prepare my weapons. And when X is back there is going to be a hand-to-hand struggle between the sensitive Marie-Anne and, as Père X says, Marie-Anne of Jesus. May the latter come out victorious!

And now, my dear Mamma, as you share my great secret I shall keep nothing concealed from you. You know the bottom of my heart as well as, perhaps better than, I know it myself. This morning, with the permission of Père X, I renewed my vow of the 28th of June, 1891. It was from the bottom of my heart that I gave myself, delivered myself, to our Lord that He might make of me whatever He wishes. Ask Him, with me, to make me entirely submissive to his adorable will, however painful the sacrifice He may require of me. I have prayed my good father to carry to the feet of Jesus my heart and my life and ask Him to dispose of them according to his good pleasure. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

My dear Mamma, as you are the only one who will read my letter of a day or two ago, you may keep it if you so desire. Once I have left home it will not matter what any one sees or what any one says about me, but till then we shall keep all entirely to ourselves. The day before yesterday I received a letter from Père X. It is really very kind of him to take such an interest in the least of his penitents. His letter has done me much good. He tells me to *broaden* my piety and to make the great intentions of the Church my own intentions. It is to pray for the Church that I am to consecrate my life.

July 26, 1892.

Yesterday the thought of my dear father did not leave my mind. It was *his* feast also. And had he not the best of celebrations in Heaven? We offered him the flowers of our prayers, sweet-smelling garlands, I hope, which he might

lay at the feet of Saint Francis, whom he loved so much, or at those of our Lady, or offer to God Himself. Isn't this a touching thought?

. . . I dreamed last night that the rose-colored *robe écossaise* which Catherine mentioned to me was turned to a worn-out cotton and that the *grand prix* hat was fastened under my chin with wrapping-cord. I awoke with a start! You see, I am not yet detached from the things of earth and that I should feel a great repugnance to appearing in public in such mean trappings.

Dear little Mamma, thanks for your dear letter of yesterday, which did me a lot of good. I think I have improved a little of late; but I do not set much store by that, because it is not very difficult to be amiable with no one here but Gabrielle and the children. I shall not cry victory till I have had a severer trial. You can imagine, of course, that we are suffering from your prolonged absence, but we accept the will of God and pray that this new sacrifice may be profitable to our little Jacques. God grant that at last we shall see one another on Wednesday. Our joy will perhaps be all the greater for this delay. In any case we shall have done our duty and accomplished the holy will of the Divine Master, and we shall enjoy in peace the unspeakable happiness of being together again after so long a separation. Five-and-a-half weeks, Mamma dear! But we shall forget it all once we are reunited. It is only God who will not forget it, as I hope, in order to reward us some day according to the degree of resignation with which we have accepted his divine will. Don't be a bit anxious about us, my dear Mamma. We

are happy in spite of all, because we feel the loving hand of the Master, and we shall ask for nothing but what He wills Himself. How good He is!

Le Patys, July 28, 1892.

. . . As for me, I am still a bad girl. This appears less on the outside, but I can easily perceive it in the interior. I wish ever so much to be penetrated with the thought that I am the worst of creatures. But it is difficult. When I say to myself that I am such I at once feel proud of my humility. It is very odd indeed, and no less distressing. Oh, how wearisome to have so much to do, so much to labor at, in one's interior, and what a task it is to make good this ill-disposed nature of ours! But if I can do nothing of myself, *omnia possum in Eo qui me confortat.*[1] May He, then, come to my assistance!

My dear Mamma, I now entirely agree with our good Mrs. Chaussée, who says, "When you see Madam you will say, 'Here she is!' " Indeed there is now no help for it but to take this view of the matter. I would walk to Paris on my knees if I could bring you back from there at once. Oh, when you are back at last!!!

Yesterday we had a frightful storm. It was like being present at artillery practice. The peals of thunder were like the bursting of shells, and every moment we were expecting a thunderbolt. I was the worst scared of all. I had never been so much frightened by a storm in my life, and I did nothing but pray the whole time. My conscience, I believe, was not one bit alarmed; but it will sound ridiculous if I tell you that I

[1] I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.—*St. Paul.*

absolutely believed I was at the point of death; and I experienced how difficult it is to make the sacrifice of one's life. In my case, at least, it seemed difficult. This is for you, Mamma dear: I haven't said a word about what I felt to the others; the more so as it would raise a great laugh; for although the storm was very violent, it was not really dangerous. It was simply that my nerves were much excited. Possibly God wished to test my detachment from life. . . .

Good-by, Mamma dear. Pray hard for me. I receive a great many compliments. It is difficult for me to prevent people from thinking so well of me. What is most singular about it is that all these compliments are given with the utmost sincerity. Only yesterday evening some supposed evidence of my great scholarship was brought out, and I had no little difficulty in convincing people that it was exaggerated. Thank God, I am not much taken by such fine phrases.

At the end of the same year she wrote as follows:—

My dear little Teresa, Mamma has bid me write to you, as I have been feeling very dull. I haven't a book to read, nor can I play the piano, as there are four keys in succession that will not sound a note. You see, I am in a bad plight.

We have had no visitors of late. We are living like the wolves. Every one seems to have forgotten that there is a delightful little corner of the world which is called Le Patys, and that the dwellers in this nook are the most charming people imaginable. This state of things, however, is not unwelcome to the charming people,

for they have much to do and are not in the habit of losing their time. . . .

The days come and go and are all alike. Work, prayer, recreation, all is regulated as in a convent. Ours is a good type of family life—calm, occupied and sanctifying. What pleasant memories we shall have of it when we are living in every corner of France or are scattered to the four points of the compass! . . . Le Patys is bare, the trees are shorn of their leaves. Nevertheless it is a charming place, and everywhere we see in fancy the dear form of our father, who was so fond of this little spot.

. . . At this moment we are, nearly all of us, to wit, Gabrielle, Catherine, Yvonne, Françoise, Michel and myself, in the library. The stove is droning deliciously, and each one is working away in his or her corner. It is not, of course, as quiet as in our rooms, but where there are many thus together, one must learn to retire within himself. Michel is doing his spelling with Catherine; Françoise is writing a dictation with Gabrielle; Yvonne is sewing, and at the same time rehearsing a story; and your humble servant is writing to you.

During the same period she penned a number of resolutions which give us the secret of her habitual recollection and show us the motives inspiring her continual efforts to become perfect. These resolutions are written under the legend:

In via vitae non progredi regredi est.[1]

[1] In the way of life, not to advance is to go back.

I will always rise very regularly. When my first thought has not been for God I will humble myself, regarding it as a sign of little love. I will dress quickly and use my mirror as little as possible: I know what harm this does me. As soon as I am ready I will begin my prayer, even though I may not have a chance of finishing it. On communion days I will think of my happiness, from the moment of rising till the time of Mass, exciting in myself sentiments of humility, faith and love. The last of these three should be uppermost, though I should not forget my nothingness and the greatness of God.

During Mass I will follow with my eyes and with my mind every part of the Sacrifice which is being consummated on the altar, not forgetting at the moment of consecration to unite myself most intimately with the Heart of Jesus, offering myself to Him and desiring to become, like Him, a *victim*. After the *Agnus Dei* I will think of nothing but my communion, actual or spiritual, giving my whole heart and my whole attention to this preparation.

I will make my thanksgiving with the greatest devotion, and it will never be shorter than a quarter of an hour. It is from this source I shall derive strength and holiness.

I will not forget the presence of God in any of my actions, even the material ones. I will make much use of ejaculatory prayer. At half past ten I will make my meditation, bestowing great care upon it, including the preparation and the review. It will be good also before luncheon to make the examen for the morning hours and a second examen in the evening for the remaining time. At nearly every meal I will deprive

myself of something, being careful to do it unnoticed. I will endeavor also to practice many spiritual mortifications, which are the hardest. I will say my rosary with great recollection, sometimes kneeling. My one great endeavor must be *to avoid losing time.* I will say my prayers with the greatest attention, both the hourly ones and those of morning and evening.

When traveling by train I will not be ashamed to say my beads or to make the sign of the cross. Our Lord will see in this a proof of my fidelity and my attachment. He knows that I find this hard. In passing a church I will fly in thought to the foot of the tabernacle and make a fervent act of the love of God.

My arms shall be prayer and mortification;
My love, a crucified God;
My strength and my joy, the holy communion;
My favorite hour, that of Holy Mass;
My motto, *Nihil sum;*[1]
My great end and aim, Heaven!

The reader will doubtless have remarked how practical and how well considered are the resolutions of this girl of fifteen, how little they savor of a mere passing enthusiasm, and what knowledge of interior mortification they reveal in one so young. It is true that neither in the notes just cited, nor in previous ones, is there any evidence of the extraordinary or of the heroic. That type of virtue she was to realize only at a later period, though in a degree known to God alone, as her life was so hidden and interior. But the qualities that shone out in her tender years were a great good will to profit by the least faults committed and an ardor of love that must

[1] I am nothing.

needs aspire to and draw to itself the highest gifts of grace. Any girl of her age could have done what Marie-Anne did at the age of fifteen. She prayed, she was self-denying, she strove in earnest to get rid of her defects; she pursued her studies and moved in her proper groove in the life of the family; and in all this, what was there to attract special attention? Nothing, assuredly, to human eyes; but the eyes of the angels saw in her a perfect purity, a genuine humility, an ardent and tender piety and daily interior striving. It was these simple virtues that God was one day to bless and raise to a high plane of perfection.

Chapter 4

It was impossible that God should withhold from the soul of Marie-Anne the treasure hidden in suffering. He had already tried her by cruel separations, but for hearts possessing great depths there must be corresponding depths of suffering. Some of these sufferings have few outward symptoms, but interiorly, they not only lay hold of the natural affections but detach one from supernatural joys themselves. Above all, they rid the soul of the continual reawakening and intrusion of self. If the soul would arrive at the purity of love, such trials as these, hidden, most delicate, and reserved for souls whom God intends to raise to great heights, must be passed through. They are incomprehensible to those who never come into close contact with them. At Gethsemani it was only Peter, James and John who were near to Jesus in his agony. However strange these trials may appear, they exist and their effect is to purify.

Marie-Anne was now receiving her first lessons in this despoiling of self. She had that discomforting experience, inevitable in the case of one who is called to the religious life, who aspires to it most ardently but is obliged to remain a few years in the world, where, notwithstanding an exceptionally Christian environment, everything seems alien and strange. Let it not be said that such feelings are only symptoms of ingratitude or of mental exaltation. The most truly devoted souls,—devoted in some cases to the point of heroism, shown in an

entire sacrifice of life,—the strongest souls as well as the calmest and most self-contained, have passed through this martyrdom. Its effect is to search the heart and remove all base alloy from a love whose one object should be God. It fills with bitterness every occupation, every conversation, every affection into which God does not in some way enter. It sheds a darkness over the soul in order that it may rise out of this salutary gloom to the vision of "the true light that enlighteneth every man coming into this world."

Marie-Anne had, moreover, to do violence to herself in order to rise out of herself and to overcome a temptation common to all beginners—that of shutting themselves up in the intimacy of their interior life, without any concern as to the good they might do around them. She had to learn, to her own cost, that those who are called to religion are called for the sake of others as well as for their own, and that vocation is concerned as much, perhaps, with giving as with receiving. We have already noticed the impulse of grace that made her offer herself at the moment of the consecration at Mass to be like her Lord, a *victim*. This spirit of self-oblation, which was to go to such lengths—greater, indeed, than she believed at the time—must begin its work by an immolation of natural tastes and feelings.

Finally, she had to learn that the heaviest burden one has to carry is oneself, a burden from which there is no riddance. To know well one's own misery, to habituate oneself to it, to rejoice in it—this was the sublime lesson which was mastered by one who said with admirable simplicity, "My God, I thank You because I am nothing in your sight." [1]

[1] Prayer of General de Sonis

Marie-Anne wrote for her own use the following notes:—

Nihil sum!

January 14, 1893.

I hardly know what I am, what I do, or what I ought to do. I do not see clearly; nothing presents itself in a light absolutely trustworthy, and all is mist around my soul. I believe, though I am not sure of it, that this springs from a great depth of pride, which blinds me in regard to myself and prevents me from seeing God.

I feel myself alone, left in my own hands, without any real guide; and yet I have safe guides, but I do not feel their guidance. Sometimes I do not know whether what I do is good or bad, whether it would be better to do one thing rather than another, whether I am good or bad. . . . I suffer from this state of uncertainty,—from this difficulty in seeing things clearly. How do I stand? I do not know, any more than whither I am drifting. What am I to do? I do not know in the least.

When told I am at fault I do not see that I am doing wrong, and yet I regard as great faults things which are really trifles. Where is the remedy for this blindness? How shall I learn to see? I am sluggish, I am a weakling: that I know; but what is the secret of strength?

Shall I find it in rising regularly in the morning, in the order and regularity of my day, in a general mortification of my levity of mind? Is it in praying long, in frequent vocal prayers, in continual aspirations to God? Is it in the

mortification of my pride? In loving those about me and in occupying myself with what may be agreeable to them? Or is it in great meekness, or in the cultivation of peace? Shall I find it in the common life, or in living apart as much as possible? Does it lie in generosity, in devotedness?—My God, it is everywhere, in everything that is good. If I might express it in a word, it is the love of Jesus. But that love itself—how is it to be acquired? I do not know. The one way that is at all clear to me is by the mortification of all that pleases me, the subduing of my senses to my will, and the submitting of the will itself to the will of God. But how arrive at that?

Submission of the senses—what do I understand by that? I mean rather the submission of the flesh. The flesh is pleased with irregular rising in the morning, with laziness in dressing, with distractions in prayer (due to indolence), with thinking about food and drink, with desultory work, with the desire of comfort. The flesh is rebellious and ambitious; it wants to be surrounded by admirers; it will never bow to humiliation; it shrinks from unpleasant truths; it despises and humbles another in order to win credit for itself; it neglects the good of others; it seeks itself in all things, sees only self, lives on self. Guilty, miserable flesh! It is you I must conquer!

Marie-Anne strove courageously to get rid of this painful state of mind, and she begged for aid of Him who was her all. Believing she heard an answer to her appeal, she embodied it in the following plan of life:

Under the Eye of Jesus

January 31, 1893.

This is what my dear Jesus dictates to me as a plan of perfection:—

1. Accepting trials without murmuring, without being depressed, at such times thinking I am of no account, and keeping in good humor in order to cheer up others. What does it matter if they say, "Marie-Anne has no heart to feel *anything*"? Jesus will see that the heart He has given me is wounded within me, and if it pleases Him that I should show no outward sign of this, what does it matter if they are mistaken about my feelings?—I should always take greater care of the interior than of the exterior, because the interior is Jesus and the exterior is only his poor creatures. When Jesus is truly within me, will He not show Himself sufficiently without? So, then, cheerfulness in trials, a smile for the afflicted, even when I am afflicted myself.

2. Self-obliteration. What am I? What is a girl of fifteen, sixteen, years in a family when she lives only for herself? Now I live only for myself, and yet I remain the same. I must count myself as nothing, absolutely nothing, and I must never ask for anything, even reasonably, when it only concerns my comfort, my pleasure. When I receive a pleasant offer of any kind I must be silent: my sisters are of more account than I, and it matters more that *they* should accept the offer. When any one asks, "Who will come along?" or "Who wants this?" I will see that my sisters go, that *they* get the thing in question, that they enjoy themselves.

When anything disagreeable is suggested I will come forward, but without any display, as self must be kept in the background, yet with some insistence, as though the thing were pleasant. Then I will mount at once above my feelings and preferences, to which such things are irksome, and see, as it were, in the background Jesus, who is smiling and waiting. In discussions I will not express my opinion when no good will come of it. What am I? A poor fleeting straw! Am I, then, to pass for something better?—Self-obliteration. I must never ask for something better than I have, never complain. Oh, I know it is difficult, but Jesus is smiling behind it all! I must excuse myself as little as possible, answer meekly.

3. I must refuse my body whatever is merely agreeable without being useful; as, for instance, eating between meals, seeking fine things, remaining too long in bed, sitting during prayers, staying away from pious meetings or visits to the church, for fear of the cold, the rain, etc. . . . As I am nothing in the house, all disagreeable things, all trouble and annoyance, should be mine. It is I who should do without things, lest others be deprived of them.

4. Devoting myself to those around me. I simply belong to Jesus, and consequently I am the property, the good of my neighbor. I should give myself, spend myself, be ready for occasions of affording pleasure to others or of saving them annoyance or trouble. I will take all unpleasant things upon myself, everything of which I can relieve others. Oh! I know it is hard, but when I shall meet Jesus and He shall see me bending under my burden, He will make

haste to help me, to relieve me, to give me his divine assistance. Avoiding everything savoring of exception or favor—I owe myself to all. A word, a smile, a pleasant and affectionate way of speaking. . . . It is often hard, but it may do so much good. I must make no account of my own interest, my own profit. It is the interests of Jesus I should seek, as I wholly belong to Him. In all, then, let me be the smile of the good God![1]

5. *Loving the soul of my neighbor.* Loving it with a supernatural love, with a love all but infinite. Loving the souls of my brothers, my sisters, my friends—all. Doing good. Oh! here again one must not account himself as anything. Why not stoop to what is lowly if it is to do good to a soul? Is it not rather to raise than to lower oneself in the eyes of Jesus? Avoiding every harsh, impatient or haughty word. O poor Nothing, how can you dare raise yourself aloft?—Trying to discover the tastes and inclinations of a soul, in order through them to lead it to Jesus. With that end in view, taking no thought of myself, but of others; passing over the physical defects of a person, and even his moral imperfections, and seeing only a soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Praying for every one.

6. *Finally, never losing my peace of soul.* Trials, vexations, annoyances—all these should leave me calm and like a mirror always reflecting Jesus. After a fault I must lift my eyes to the Master and say: "O Master, You see again how weak I am and what need I have of You. Forgive me. I love You above all things."

[1] A quotation from "Père X."

After that I must be quieter in mind and strive to become holier, being more and more diligent in avoiding venial sin. I shall go calmly to communion, to confession, to meditation, take calmly what is irksome or troublesome, speak and act calmly, peacefully. . . . Always, in all, above all, I must see Jesus.

Notwithstanding these efforts, our Lord, for her greater purification, willed that she should suffer. He immolated in her, with a severity for which we shall bless Him in heaven, her excessive desire to feel she was loved and sustained by Himself. He let her seek Him, and was pleased with her perseverance, her generosity, and even with what she suffered. He brought home to her, by an experience never of too long continuance, for it was quickly forgotten, that without the light of grace the heart moves in darkness, incapable of telling good from evil. He had in store for her also the great merit of an act of self-humiliation, that of revealing her interior suffering in order to beg a remedy for it; for when heaven is silent, recourse must be had to human counselors who can speak in God's name; and Marie-Anne, not without an effort, but with courageous simplicity, turned to her mother. On such occasions she usually preferred to write, and one evening she placed with a timid hand the following letter in her mother's room:—

Le Patys, April 30, 1893, Sunday.

My dear Mamma, you have asked to know what is at the bottom of my heart. Alas! what can I say about the bottom of my heart? I haven't the smallest understanding of it myself. It is a scene of frightful disorder, a hopeless

medley, a thicket which I fear to explore. It harbors an insensate pride, much sloth, much self-seeking, much self-love, and many dreary things besides. What am I to do? Whither shall I turn? Who will deliver me from myself? I know no longer how to struggle or what to do; and seeing the failure of all that I do I am often tempted to throw down my arms. What will you have me do, my dear Mamma, with such material as this? Would it not take a saint to get any good out of it? It certainly requires one who has more courage and strength than I, one who knows how to struggle and is not easily disheartened; but I—! I acknowledge, my dear Mamma, I cannot do one thing more, because I am almost in a state of despair. This is the strongest and most treacherous of temptations, I know; but how overcome it when I have to deal with a character like mine? Yes, I again ask you, what shall I make out of it and how shall I set to work at it?

In this state of things, Mamma dear, it must be clear that I cannot be of the least service to Yvonne. Having continually in my mind the thought of my lassitude and my discouragement, I cannot dare think of undertaking a task so difficult and requiring so much virtue. This is the first obstacle and the one from which I suffer the most. But besides, as I must tell you openly at last, *the task itself is a puzzle to me.* I have not the smallest idea of how to set about it. I see neither the end nor the means of attaining it. As long as I have not a clear and distinct notion of my duty, I can do nothing. I cannot set to work without knowing what I have to do. Now I do not know even what Yvonne

needs. This I never did understand, and I have been groping about and succeeding in nothing. Now, Mamma dear, if you can draw up a little plan showing the end to be aimed at and the means of attaining it, I promise you I will do all I can to begin the work courageously.

In giving you these two reasons for being at a standstill, which is almost complete, I do not mean to excuse myself for having done so little. I know that with courage I could have done more, and I am well persuaded that there is nothing in me but pride and sloth, and that I am only fit to be trampled under foot and mingled with the dust. I merely submit to you my difficulties, the first of which makes me suffer and the second ties my hands. I hope for aid from you, and I ask it most earnestly, for I have great need of it.

Ah! my dear Mamma, I am so sad. Even in my gayest hours, even when I am laughing with my sisters, I am terribly depressed and have scarcely a moment's respite. It is only my communions that give me some quiet, though even there I am often sore at heart when our Lord shows me clearly how little I love Him. Ah! who will free me from this state and who will give peace to my soul? Peace, I well know, will be found in holiness, in love, ardent and active. But how attain to it. Once more I ask, what shall I do?

Forgive me, dear Mamma, for showing you the gloomy depths of a soul so detestable. I would never tell you these things by word of mouth, for I am quite incapable of it, but here, alone with my interior, I have let my pent-up and unhappy heart overflow.

Living amid surroundings which any one might envy, living here where all is joy and grace, I cannot be satisfied. I regret nothing, I desire nothing, and yet I am unhappy. Graces are lavished upon me; I have all that I could desire; why, then, am I so sad?

I conjure you, Mamma dear, to save me. Show me the way to become a saint, to please our Lord, to please you and all the others. I accept all in order to please the good God, and if you will show me my way I believe nothing will seem to me difficult.

I am resolved to begin in earnest, expecting all, absolutely all, from the grace of our Lord, which alone can act in me. I am willing to think no more of my lassitude, of my disgust; I am willing to trample under foot all that is evil in me.

Tell me, then, Mamma dear, what I am to do for Yvonne and what I am to do for myself. I need to be placed upon my feet and directed into the right way. After that I shall try and go forward bravely.

I must also ask your pardon for not knowing better how to speak to you in person. What should I say to you except that I am willing to do all, but that I am unhappy, that I am worthless, that I can do nothing of good. There you have it in a word, and is it not sad enough? I feel so much ashamed when I think of myself in comparison with my beloved father, with you, dear Mamma, and with my dear elder sisters.

Our Lord can do all things and it is on Him that I rely. The making me a saint is a work for Him to accomplish. Bless me, then, my dear Mamma, in his name and in the name

of our dear father, that I may at last mend my ways.

The mother who is here addressed with such filial confidence had no difficulty in showing her daughter that the sufferings she was enduring were a trial, which she must bear with patience, a discipline schooling her in sanctity. Acting in concert with her daughter's confessor in her efforts to lead this choice soul to perfection, Mme. Hervé-Bazin busied her more and more in household duties and in the care of her brothers and sisters. She was given charge of the chapel, an occupation most dear to her and most agreeable to her natural tastes as well as to the desires of her soul. She spent a part of the day at this work, among other things renewing the flowers that decorated the little sanctuary, and renovating certain parts of the chapel where the damp had spoiled the painting on the walls; for she could paint with charming effect, especially in depicting things delicate and graceful. She then returned to her room, which she had decorated, after her manner, with all the family souvenirs that she had been able to discover. The walls were covered with them, and in the midst of all—for she must have everywhere a symbol of the love in her heart—was placed a crown of thorns which she had plaited herself into what she thought was the nearest resemblance to the crown worn by our Lord. Thus pictures of her Lord and of his passion, portraits of her relatives, relics of the past and emblems of the Catholic and royalist convictions of her native place—these formed the external setting of her girl's life amidst the calm and quiet of Le Patys. She next busied herself with the instruction of the youngest of her brothers and sisters. Though she loved them

tenderly, this task cost her an effort, as did everything that broke in upon her continual reverie and upon work she could pursue in silence. It required a real struggle with herself to converse, or to work in others' company, or to busy herself with others. Yet no one would have supposed as much after reading what she wrote to her friend, to her sisters, or to others. When she did speak, her conversation was pleasant, witty, intelligent, but, above all, pious, and her letters were of a piece with her conversation. She could neither speak nor write for any length of time without the thought of God recurring, and she spoke of Him so easily and agreeably that it seemed quite natural.

It was in the following terms that she begged to be given charge of her little sister Françoise:—

Dear Mamma:

The other day, when we were speaking of governesses and education, you said that the reason why my sisters could not occupy themselves with the instruction of the children was that they had other duties. But I, Mamma dear, who am at once the strongest and the most useless one in the house, said to myself at once, "Am not I, too, their elder sister? and is it not my duty to do what Gabrielle and Catherine are unable to do for our little sisters?" And believing this thought came from God, I reflected on it, I prayed, and I now ask you, dear little Mamma, to let me take charge of the education of Françoise, at least during the few months between this and our return to Angers; by way of trial, if you wish. It is not a resolution taken lightly; I have counted the

cost and thought of the trouble involved in such an occupation; and a degree of virtue which I am far from possessing would be necessary; and hence, many a time when I have been on the point of making this request I have hesitated. But I believe it is the will of the Lord and that He will be pleased with the dependent position in which I shall have placed myself and will not refuse me his grace.

As to Yvonne, I do not feel I have enough authority or enough knowledge to justify my asking leave to direct her; but I feel well enough equipped to set Françoise to her books, at least for a little while, and even, if you should think proper, dear Mamma, to give her a start on the piano and in English. Possibly all this would necessarily draw me away from my own studies; but it would not be neglecting them to review with Françoise what I have already somewhat forgotten. And then, however seriously I give myself to this occupation, I shall always have a little time to myself, which I shall devote to my other work, even if I have to shorten my recreations. The great obstacle, as I know too well, my dear good Mamma, is my entire lack of the virtues absolutely necessary. I fear you would never be able to reckon on my perseverance or on my real devotion to the work. But what shall I say to this fear except that our Lord is all-powerful and that it is for Him that I undertake this task? I tremble, Mamma dear, but I hope. I take the firm resolution to do all that I can, and if I fail *one* day I shall see to it that the next day shall be a thousand times better than the preceding ones.

I should like to see Françoise' work gone

about seriously and in a way that would contribute to her advancement. As far as her health permits I should like to have the work regulated and regular: both of us need to acquire habits of exactness. As to the authority I should like to have, we shall speak of that later, when you will have accepted my offer. My own health need be no obstacle for me. The days on which I suffer really too much to work are of rare occurrence, thanks be to God. I shall, therefore, give myself freely to the work, without fear and without interruption.—Let me repeat it, Mamma dear, the desire I have expressed is not sprung from sudden enthusiasm. I have reflected and prayed, because I have a keen sense of the difficulties I shall have to overcome to produce good results. My resolution was taken calmly and without excitement: I am too desirous of its being a lasting one to lean for support upon anything short of the love of our Lord.—I shall await your answer, dear Mamma, joyfully submitting in advance to your wishes and your bidding. Jesus, first and last! May all be done through Him!

Once, when away from Le Patys, she wrote to Catherine:

My dear, thanks for your splendid letter, which gave us much pleasure. I, too, my dear little sister, feel the void caused by this separation, and I wish I had you near me. But as our Lord wills otherwise, let us adore his holy will and make the sacrifice bravely; but we shall be together before long and these two months of separation will soon be forgotten, ex-

cept by our good angel, who will reckon them double in our account, as I hope. This morning had its great happenings. At ten minutes of eight we left the house, the three of us, *piano* but *sano*,[1] to go to Saint-Patrice. Just as we arrived at the church all the clocks in the town were striking eight. We went in and—the Offertory had just begun! Jacques, who is an expert in exact time, uttered an exclamation which drew the attention of the congregation. I may add that many others were arriving at the same time as ourselves and consequently missing Mass. We took our places, however; the chair-woman appeared; Jacques called her, and drawing her toward him by the elbow said: "You tell the sacristan it is ridiculous: tell him his clock is more than five minutes fast, that everybody is losing Mass, and we cannot stand a clock keeping time like that. Mind you, now!" The poor woman felt abashed, but promised to deliver every word of his message, though she would put it more mildly than he. We stayed till the end of the Mass and then left the church. At the door we met a poor old woman who is always there, begging alms. Jacques began his little speech again, "You must tell the sacristan, etc." The poor woman felt pretty much as we did and promised to do as Jacques bid her. We then repaired to a pastry-shop to have a cake before returning for the nine o'clock Mass. On the way we met the sacristan's wife. Jacques could not let *her* escape; so we stopped her and began for the third time our little discourse, but with additional emphasis. Mrs. Sacristan answered

[1] Slowly but surely (or rightly).

very quietly: "Monsieur, it is Père de M. who sets the clock, and you have no one to blame but him." This was the finishing touch: Père de M. making us lose Mass! Jacques swore by all the gods and little fishes that he should not be any the better for it in Heaven, and that he must not only set back the clock but pay the two francs fifteen centimes which our luncheon had cost.

Thanks for the delicious violets. I have had the odor of them about me all day long. When I drew my rosary from its leather case I found it all embalmed. At first, as you can imagine, I thought it was the perfume of my virtues . . . but, lo! it was the violets from Le Patys! Good-by, my dear. Sweet remembrances to all.

I should indeed like to be singing with you at the mission. I, who had such hopes of being converted at it, am now plunged into the world. Do you at least be converted, all of you, and pray for your poor sister that she may receive the graces here which would have converted her at home.—Who has charge of my sacristy? Take good care of it. I shall be so glad to see it again.—It will be quite a diversion for me to read X***'s letter. I promise to be charitable, although, as Gabrielle well says, I am not converted. You will have good reason for chanting to me, *"A la mort, à la mort!* [1] when I am back home. . . .

October 5, 1893.

Well, well! my good little sister, are we becoming a saint? Is Saint Francis giving you already an affection for Lady Poverty?—Do you intend going about instructing our brothers

[1] *At the hour of death!*—probably suggestive of mission sermons.

the little birds and exhorting them to sing the praises of God?—Don't fear; I am not going to preach you a sermon, even if I do think you very happy to be judged worthy of being a member of the Third Order, and I only wish to express my joy at seeing you enter in a special manner upon the service of our Lord. Pray that I too may enter upon it with all courage.

Good-by, dear. Remember that I have a toothache—it is necessary you should. I embrace you with all my heart and charge you with all sorts of messages to everybody. Embrace dear Mamma as I do you, and believe me always and everywhere, with or without a toothache,

YOUR FAITHFUL MARIE-ANNE.

To Mlle. de ———:

3rd of April, 1893.

Whither, already, has the time of our blessed retreat flown? a time when we were so happy at the feet of our Lord. Oh! how I regret not to be there still! I see more clearly every day that it is much easier to take fine resolutions than to keep them, and I tremble at the thought of how much I have yet to do. Pray for me—I count upon your prayers for becoming a saint.

I should willingly offer my unchangeable good health to so many people who would employ it to so much advantage. It is my despair to think that a strength that is proof against so many ills is of no use for the glory of God. Would you like to exchange with me? I will take your miseries upon myself and give you—But God has not ordered things thus. His thoughts are not ours, and it is for us, what-

ever be our state, to bless and thank Him without asking for any such change.—The only change to be brought about is that poor Marie-Anne become a saint: she will then do wonders. The time when I shall be a saint is so far off, oh, so far off! . . . supposing it is not a matter of grasping at the blue heavens. . . .

June 19.

. . . As to myself, I am not making much headway; my progress in the way of perfection is provokingly slow.—My case is absolutely like that of a faint-hearted soldier who is all courage and daring in time of peace but who takes to his heels at the first sight of fire. It is sad to have to say so, but I feel it is very true.

July 10, 1893.

Yes, I have confidence, not in myself, who am powerless, but in Him who strengthens me. He will do what I cannot do of myself. With the tabernacle, with communion, I need not despair that even I may become *a saint*. But what efforts are to be made in the meantime, and what need I have of the help of grace—Ah, yes, let us love, let us love! Let us love above all, let us love despite all, our Divine Master Jesus: that is the life of Heaven, of which we shall have a taste on earth.

To her mother, on the subject of a work of zeal which would necessitate her absence from home, she writes:—

The great thought which dominates all and draws me to it is that it is a work of self-devotedness. I know I shall be absolutely obliged to go out of myself, to give, to deliver myself,

entirely without a thought of self. To my nature it is very hard, but I wish to see in this the grace of God, who is so good as to send me an opportunity of actually doing what I so much admire. Here is my chance of going out of myself, of forgetting my inclinations, my tastes, my desires; and if our Lord is more sensibly with me in the calm of my dear Patys, I know He will be more really with me in the self-devoting life I shall follow away from home.

. . . I shall have to be always in the best of humor, and especially when all around me are gloomy and I am inclined to be so myself. I must console X, lavish attentions upon her, distract her, encourage her. I am delighted, because at least Marie-Anne must needs disappear, to make room for something better. And then, there will be so much to be done around me. How I shall compass all this is not so clear to me, for I feel I am quite incapable of it, but I shall use to this end every necessary means. As it is understood that I am not to count for anything, nothing will be hard for me.

Finally, I desire only the will of the good God. I shall in every way be happy if I do what God asks of me. I seek neither my own pleasure nor my own satisfaction; my one object is sanctity, and I desire to accept generously all that will lead me to it, *ad majorem Dei gloriam.*[1]

I assure you, Mamma dear, that in all my letters I tell you, or at least I feel that I tell you, all that is at the bottom of my heart and all my thoughts. I speak to you as I would

[1] For the greater glory of God.

speak to myself. The real truth, I assure you, is that I am cheerful, calm, peaceful. If once in a while I have yielded to some weakness, I have well repented of it. Sometimes when I am in the parlor I am lacking in spirits and interest, and I cannot resist the desire to dive into a book; but with this exception I try to be cheerful and to laugh, even at things that do not amuse me in the least.

I am very grateful to X for thinking of me and wishing to see me. I surely do not merit so many attentions, and I am afraid to return, now that every one has had time to forget my wickedness. I make, alas! little progress in virtue, less even than I hoped to make. It saddens me and fills me with confusion, because our Lord, on the other hand, gives me many graces. But my desire is to build all on humility, and I do not know in the least how to acquire this virtue. What shall I do?

I wish to be charitable, as you have been so well recommending, Mamma dear. I see more and more how beautiful a virtue charity is. I really believe that the best way to acquire this virtue is to live for a while among people who are somewhat lacking in it. This habit of theirs of always disparaging others and blaming everything just horrifies me and makes me face about at once and speak in praise of every one. How easily I fall into contradictory moods! In fine, there is still so much to be done, or, better still, nothing has been done. I recommend myself to every one's prayers, especially to those of Monsieur l'abbé.

If you wish to know me thoroughly, Mamma dear, I am telling you all. Really and truly,

I am not gloomy or unhappy. I want, absolutely, nothing but what God wants. What I say on this subject is entirely between you and me. If it is God's will that I remain here longer than I expected, I think I shall accept it without complaint, though I shall return to you with great joy. My best moments are during morning Mass, at which we, happily, spend a considerable time. Yesterday we went to the cathedral, where we had the vespers of the Blessed Virgin and a fine benediction with music. I was delighted with it all. I must surely find some way of being converted, as I am not to make the mission. . . .

October 27, 1893.

. . . I feel how just are your reproaches, Mamma dear. I am always too self-seeking and I cannot succeed in burying myself completely. I am so much in the habit of thinking of myself that I regard it as quite an achievement to occupy myself a little with others. I feel ashamed when I think of it. When shall I put Jesus in the place of it all?

I have a little fear about my stay in Paris. I shall try at last to have Jesus uppermost in my thoughts and to do everything as perfectly as possible. I shall endeavor to be, as Père X puts it, "a ray of sunlight, always and to all," or what he calls "the smile of the good God." You will pray for me more than usual during this time, my very dear Mamma.

To Mlle. de ———:

. . . I feel that a struggle whose issue will be of the first importance is going on within

me now. . . . Well, I must perish and Jesus Christ must reign!

. . . One feels more the need of prayer in this great Paris of ours, where so few know and so few love our Lord, and where the *Parce populo*[1] rises continually from the heart to the lips. Do you not feel that we French women should form to ourselves hearts larger and stronger, hearts worthy of the eldest daughters of the Church?

Finally, in a moment of sensible fervor, during which our Lord compensated His child for her interior sufferings, Marie-Anne opened her heart in this fashion:—

. . . I will tell you in confidence that our Lord is spoiling me; for I cannot make the least effort without its being the occasion of a greater grace. I feel overpowered by the divine liberality of Jesus. He visits me in every possible way, and my ordinary actions, my readings, my prayers, make Him lavish His favors upon me. I recognize His blessed hand even in moments of aridity and desolation; for it is then He is waiting to see if I am faithful. What rends my heart, what prostrates me, is that I do not respond as I wish to these repeated graces,—that I am tepid, sluggish, incapable of doing anything for the God who gives me so much! Supplicate Him, I beg you, for your poor little friend.—I know not how I thus let you read my interior, even to the inmost recesses of my soul. What will you see there, alas! but a poor child deluged with graces, yet

[1] Spare thy people!—*Joel* and *Liturgy*.

cruelly ungrateful? Read there, however, the goodness, the incomprehensible love of Jesus for our souls. . . . May our Lord give me humility, forgetfulness of self, and the grace of not offending Him: that is all I ask. But no, it is not all: I want love, love without bounds, a consuming love. I want to love as the saints have loved, without any return, a love knowing neither feebleness nor faint-heartedness. I want a love that knows how to conquer, a love that nothing can impede. I want the perfection of the love of Jesus.

Chapter 5

Marie-Anne moved courageously forward, her soul in the meantime elevated and strengthened. Occasionally a cry of love or a brief spell of joy varied the monotony of those long weeks of suffering, and we find traces of these different interior states in the hasty jottings she made at the close of each day in her little notebooks.

November 11, 1892.

But my dear Jesus, I do not wish You to be on the cross in my heart. . . . The cross is the way I preferred on earth, and I loved men so much that if I had had to suffer a thousand deaths to save them, I would have suffered them willingly.

I did not suspect there was so much virtue in P. Every one is improving, and I am the only one who lags behind. None the less, my Jesus, I love You with all my soul. I hate sin, even venial sin. My God, I believe that even if You had nothing for me but hatred I would love You, even then, with my whole soul, because it is not for my sake that I love You but for Yours.

November 12.

Giving Jesus to souls! What mission more beautiful! In order to give Jesus, one must possess Him, and it is in possessing Him that all perfection consists.

November 20, 1892.

After the Annunciation Mary occupied herself as usual with the cares of her household. She had no thought of self-elevation, nor did she reveal by word or by any outward sign what had come to pass within her. . . . But Saint Joseph could see his spouse all radiant with a grace which she had not possessed before and illumined by a ray of light proceeding from Him whom she was now bearing in her bosom. And what joy was Mary's in the immediate presence of her Beloved! How Jesus must have thanked her for her admirable answer to the angel. With what sweetness must He have repeated to her the angel's words, *"Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.*[1] I salute you, my dear mother; I give you my kiss of greeting; I am happy to be enclosed in your womb." O Mary, how great must have been your happiness. Let me, I beseech you, occupy a little space between Jesus' Heart and yours.

November 22.

. . . I am suffering. I must not desire to be delivered from my sufferings, asking only for what God wills. My God, I wish only what You wish, and all that You wish. I offer You my sufferings. Oh, what joy there is in suffering thus! I do not suffer either more or less physically, but what consolation! Jesus, I love You. . . .

A day without communion is a sunless day, a day covered with fog; one is always afraid the fog is coming on.

Jesus, You know how I love my dear X.

[1] Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

You know that I have done everything to make her love me, and that I have given my heart many a time. You know much better than I whether she loves me. You know if I suffer from not being loved enough. Ah! my dear Lord, judge and dispose of all, in your Heart, —affection, sadness, enjoyment of affection. Do what You will with it all. The sacrifice is painful, but your love will suffice. . . . *Nihil sum!* I know it with ever more clearness, Jesus, Jesus!

December 5.

Ah! my dear Jesus, my beloved Jesus, how You are ill treated, forgotten, despised in the adorable sacrament of your love. Grant at least that all my actions, all my thoughts, all my words may tend to love for You, in default of those who love You not. O Jesus, once more I must sacrifice all. It is You, and You alone, that I wish to love. Whatever men may say I will endure for your sake. A little more calm, a little less ardor.

December 27.

O blessed Saint John, you who alone had the privilege of reposing on the Heart of Jesus and of following your divine Master even to the cross, obtain for me, I beseech you, that desiring as I do, the love of Jesus, I may accept also his cross, by which that love is strengthened and purified.

O Jesus, as I am so bad, will You not have pity on me? *O dulcissime et amantissime Jesu, miserere!*[1]

[1] O most sweet and loving Jesus, have pity.

January 10, 1893.

Jesus, in this morning's communion promised, if I was willing, to live with me as a little Child, as He once did under the eye of Mary his Mother, as she plied her daily labor. But in order that He may be pleased with my company I must continually speak to Him with affection, in imitation of Mary at Nazareth. I must say to Him, for instance, as He has taught me: "What do You wish, Jesus? How can I help You? Maybe You have need of me? How I love You, my dear Jesus,"—and a thousand other things of the kind,—speaking to Him as Mary did, with much love and respect, leaving all that my will desires in his hands, that He may do with it according to his good pleasure.

January 27.

. . . The disciple whom Jesus loved . . . Jesus had his preferences. He sanctified, divinized, friendship. What favors He bestowed on Saint John! Disciple, virgin, evangelist, he alone reclined on Jesus' breast, he alone was present at the crucifixion, to his care our Blessed Lady was entrusted. . . . And Mary Magdalen! Oh! how consoling to think that the sinner became the dear friend of Christ, of Jesus Himself! I, too, poor little sinner though I be, am loved by Jesus. He has for me a special affection. Oh, I must remember that John and Magdalen followed Him to the cross, that they were with Him more in his sorrows than in his triumphs! To have, as Magdalen had, the privilege of seeing Him immediately after his resurrection, one must have followed Him to Calvary.

Jesus, I love You crucified: unite me to your holy passion.

February 3.

Jesus, whatever You may do I wish to love You. If You flee from me I shall fly after You. If You hide Yourself I shall find You. If You give me cold looks I shall tell You again that I love You. O Jesus, make me feel the full depth of love; let me penetrate its abyss to the limit of my power, even unto death.

Establish my soul in peace. Peace,—oh, the peace of Jesus!—how well we do all things when we are in peace! I seek peace: peace is found in the renouncing of self, in order to embrace the will of Jesus, in union with the God of peace, in the mingled strength and meekness of each action. *Pax! pax!*[1] Jesus, God of peace, have pity on me!

February 5.

Jesus, I love You! Why is it, my dear Master, that when it was this very morning that I promised to accept Your cross, You are taking it away from me already?

February 14.

All that You will, Jesus. Oh, I suffer—have pity—it is so hard! All, Jesus, all, even that, if it is your infinitely holy will.

Ah! yes, Jesus, I am willing to accept being nothing, provided You are all. You see how I rise up against humiliation. Master, O Master, I *want* to be humble and I am so proud. Give me, I beg You, your own humble, submissive, *self-renouncing* spirit.

[1] Peace! Peace!

February 23.

I suffer on days that are without communion. O Jesus, are You really all to me? But I do so little for You. It is this that confounds me and crushes me at your feet. Ah! if I could only offer You very really and sincerely the sacrifice of myself,—the sacrifice of being nothing, of counting for nothing, of being forgotten, neglected. O Jesus, how hard it is to be forgotten! Everything in me is in revolt at the thought. And yet, have You not been forgotten? Are You not still forgotten, continually? Should not a spouse desire a perfect resemblance to her beloved when the beloved is Yourself? O Jesus, whatever it may cost me, I accept being forgotten, as You are.

February 28.

Jesus, all the joys You vouchsafe me are mingled with sadness; I am never entirely happy; there is always something wanting. I should thank You for it, O Master, but I am so slack and remiss!

My beloved Jesus, how I should like to feel that I love You!

April 18.

Jesus, I am crushed! crushed at having no sense of your presence, crushed at loving You no more, crushed at having to struggle alone. *Fiat!*[1] But, Jesus, it is so hard! . . . *Deus meus, Deus meus, utquid dere-liquisti me?*[2] I unite my abandonment to yours. I accept, and, utterly crushed, I throw myself at your feet. I kiss your hands. Yes, Jesus, all feeling is

[1] Be it so!
[2] My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

gone. Love is now no more than a word. But I must still utter it: Jesus, I love You.

June 15, 1893.

Jesus, again I am prostrate. Ah! let me not forget that You had three painful falls before reaching Calvary. I should indeed rise, but I have now no strength. What will give me strength? Hope? I cannot hope, I know not how to hope. A desire of Heaven? I have no desire of Heaven. Is it love? Love is now but a word! Ah, I cling to your Heart! Bruised and bleeding, I come to You. Will You take pity on me? All seems dark, all seems terrible, my strength is gone. If by this rude trial You wish to sanctify me, I thank You and still bless You. Lord, may your holy will be done.—O *dulcissime et amantissime Jesu, miserere!* [1]

June 26.

O beloved Christ! My dear Master, my dear Jesus! May my life be hidden in You alone; may I love all in You and nothing but You. . . . I love and am loved.

She writes at the seashore:—

Jesus, how beautiful it is! It is You who hide Yourself in these waves and my soul there adores You. Grant me, my dear Master, that I may feel the power of love in me. May it rise, ever rise, in me like the crested wave that mounts above the rocks. The sea is your masterpiece in nature. My God, may my soul be

[1] O most sweet and loving Jesus, have pity!

your masterpiece in the realm of grace. Calm my soul and replace its ardor by your peace.

The sea stretches out before me, calm, blue, peaceful. . . . Such, Lord, You would wish my soul to be. But when You cast a glance at it, what do You not see in it? What waves, what billows, what tempests! Quiet, O God, this stormy sea—give me peace. Help me, for I wish to be a saint and I feel I am perishing! Crush my pride, make me meek and mild, grant that I may love. Oh, I want to be a saint! Jesus, help me!

The year 1894 was outwardly a quiet one for Marie-Anne. She spent it tranquilly in the company of her mother and sisters and was meanwhile wholly devoted to her interior formation and attentive to the voice of her beloved Master. As her little brothers and sisters grew up about her, she devoted herself to them with an ever-increasing interest. Her elder sisters were becoming more and more her confidantes. To those of them who were always with her she had, of course, no occasion to write, but her pen never tired of writing to the one who was no longer under the paternal roof. We cannot forego the pleasure of reproducing a few of these charming letters, written in her own vivacious style.

January 7, 1894.

We have just returned, Mamma and I, from the nine o'clock Mass? It was a *Missa cantata*[1] in honor of Saint Genevieve, whose feast is celebrated to-day at Saint-Laud. There was a large congregation present and all was very

[1] A mass sung or chanted.

beautiful. I thought that you, dear, would very willingly have been with us, and if you only knew how much I wished it myself. There were, as usual, many of our acquaintances present, and I could not help looking to discover in the shadow of one of the pillars my dear little Teresa, who would not have missed this Mass a few years ago. As I did not see her in the body of the church, I had to glance beyond it: in looking at the altar, at least, I was consoled by the assurance that we are not absolutely separated, as we always have a meeting-place in the Sacred Heart of our Lord. There, at least, we shall always be in one another's company.

. . . To-morrow at eight o'clock Monsieur l'abbé will say Mass at Saint Joseph's altar for the soul of our dear father. Five years already! I seem to be back in the days when he was still with us, our dear good father, and his image often comes before me so vividly that I fancy he is still near me with his dear kindly smile, and I surprise myself thinking he has not left us at all. Courage! we shall soon reach eternity and be all reunited there in the possession of a happiness knowing no end.

March 20, 1894.

This morning brought our retreat [1] to a close and we are still somewhat *in altis;* [2] still on the heights to which Père de M—— wafted us. It was delicious, I assure you. Every one, I believe, thought of you, at least those whom you knew. And when Père de M—— recommended an "associate" to the prayers of all and

[1] That of the catechists.
[2] In the heavens.

had us recite an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" for her, many, I suppose, did not know it was you he meant, but one and all said the prayers with admirable ardor.

This morning we counted those present, and we were wondering, as we always do, which of us would be missing next year! Such things must ever happen.

April 25, 1894.

We have just witnessed the raising of our great cross, which now stands at the corner of the highway and the road to Bellangerie. It was a striking scene—indeed superb. The heavy cross rose little by little, supported by cables which unwound slowly from the windlass. The composition of place was ready to hand for a meditation on Calvary. Scattered here and there on the ground were pincers, hammers and large nails, as well as cords and strong chains. The head of the cross was encircled with rays, which reminded one of the bright halo which the angels must have seen around the head of Christ. Finally, in the background, a dark sky brightened occasionally by gleams of sunlight represented to perfection the sky of Golgotha.

I hope that the Crucified Himself was there, no longer on the cross but glorified and at the same time pleased with this external expression of praise, adoration and reparation. May He raise his cross in our hearts, as we have raised it on the soil of our Patys! I hope He will let none of us live without his marking us with this sign and that we shall be found bearing this glorious mark when the cross of the Son of Man shall appear all-radiant in the heavens. Glory to the cross of Jesus!

Marie-Anne had had all this time a vocation to religion, and never on that subject had even the shadow of a doubt crossed her mind. But while this state of certainty gave her the deepest joy, especially after the vow she had made to respond to the divine call, no light was given her as to how and when she was to consecrate herself to God in religion. While she had felt no uneasiness on that score when she was very young, the hour was at hand when her uncertainty as to the order she must choose was to be the source of much suffering. By nature she was a contemplative. No one can doubt it after reading the notes we have cited. She loved silence, recollection and work in solitude. Prayer was to her an easy and agreeable exercise, she felt drawn to mortification, and her health, though not very robust, was no longer a matter of anxiety. It was natural, therefore, that her thoughts should turn to Carmel. Not a few vocations to a life of prayer have had their beginnings in an attraction to Carmel, for Carmel is for women the quintessence and the most perfect type of the combined contemplative and apostolic life. Marie-Anne had, besides, a very special devotion to Saint Teresa, whom she invoked as her mother. She had, in fact, composed a prayer to her, which she recited daily:—

> O Teresa of Jesus, admirable virgin, light of the Church, brilliant flower of Carmel, Star of Spain, pure lover of Jesus, Mother of the Carmelites and *my* mother, I beg thee and conjure thee with all my heart not to have regard to my unworthiness but to my desire to love Jesus, and to obtain for me the precious grace of knowing the place that is destined for me and the convent to which He is calling me. I beseech

thee, my most dear mother, to show me the way I am to follow, to direct my vocation and to obtain for me the strength to accomplish in all things the will of God. And if it is his holy will that I be placed on the mountain heights of thy own dear Carmel, vouchsafe to obtain for me, O holy Teresa of Jesus, the spirit of thy dear Reform, so that from this moment I may become one of thy daughters, faithful and devoted, and that I may serve our Lord with all the perfection which love of Him demands of me. My dear mother, obtain for me a sure vocation; obtain for me Carmel; obtain for me the spirit of thy order. My dear mother, may Jesus be glorified in all things! Amen.

This prayer was kept in a small portfolio which never passed out of her possession till the day she entered the convent. The paper on which it was written has turned yellow and is worn at the corners by dint of usage. Near it, on another sheet which is less discolored and bears a more recent date, is found the sequel of the above prayer, written at a time when her mind was tossed about by so many different ideas that the poor child was unable to come to a decision. It runs as follows:

My dear mother, it is because of this resignation of will, which I wish to make perfect, that I do not ask you for Carmel, because I wish to forget everything, even my dearest desires, in order to receive into a heart despoiled of everything the expression of the will of Jesus. Oh! my dear mother, may He be glorified. Touch me with the fire of your heavenly love, that I too may glorify Him! May your

sons and your daughters love and serve Him perfectly. May I never offend Him more but procure for Him an immense glory. And if this glory may be procured by my death, the complete annihilation of myself, I consent to it with all my heart, dear mother, and I shall bless Him for it.

In the same portfolio there was an offering of her life, followed by an act of consecration.

If I am to die this night I offer my life in reparation for the outrages committed against the Blessed Sacrament, and I die joyously for God.

A Very Special Consecration to My Mother in Heaven

O Virgin all-pure, thou who hast never been defiled either by the original stain or by aught else that is sinful, prostrate at thy feet and deeply sensible of my profound misery, and because of that misery, I consecrate and give myself to thee this day without reserve, acknowledging thee as my mother and as my most dear sovereign, and imploring thy most gracious aid for my salvation. I consecrate to thee my body, my soul, my senses, my heart, my faculties, all that I have, all that I am, all that I can ever possess. I wish henceforth to be wholly and simply thine, to be thy property and possession forever. Remember, O beloved Mother, the strong and indissoluble bonds that unite me to thy dear Son Jesus. It is in his name that I beg thee to take me, now and forever, under thy holy protection. O pure Virgin,

> wilt thou suffer the spouse of Jesus to profane that sacred name? Oh! I beseech thee, I conjure thee, my dear Mother, to take pity on me, to give me a special place in thy heart, and despite my unworthiness to hold me always securely in thy arms, in order that I may serve Jesus after thy example and by thy aid come to the possession of Him in Heaven. Amen.

Her confessor, though aware of her undecided state of mind, was not overeager to give her advice, and bade her not to allow herself to be unduly exercised by a question whose solution would appear at the right moment. His mind was made up as regarded the destinies of this elect soul. Hence he was not for forcing the issue and wisely awaited God's own good time. Marie-Anne was only seventeen years of age; she had time for reflection and she must give herself to prayer. And to prayer she gave herself unstintingly; indeed, she left no means untried to incline Heaven to her aid. The divine love that filled her heart made the hours appear short to her that she gave to God. "Those delicious hours," she says to her friend, "which I have thus spent during the night I enjoy as a foretaste of the hours of prayer, of office or of adoration, which I shall spend later on, when all my desires, all the aspirations of my life, shall at last be realized."

A little later she adds with a holy jealousy:—

> So Marie Louise M—— has taken the habit! Happy child! Would it were my lot to-day! And yet I cannot believe that a day will come when I shall take the veil, or put on the habit of serge, or wear no other ornament than the cross of Christ. . . . What a joy it will be to

be able to pray always, to be able to pray really, to be able to spend my life in praying for those I love.

Nevertheless, temptation was not far distant; neither was her arch-enemy, sadness. She still complains of it and endeavors to rally her courage.

> And if I did not say to myself continually that it is the will of our Lord I should very often be tempted to be sad and morose; but that would not mend matters in the least and would be bad in itself. But don't be alarmed: I am keeping my great sadness under the big lock and key of the will of God, and I am forcing myself to be in good spirits, just as if there were no corner of my heart in gloom.

Careful not to lose any of the graces which God showered upon her soul, she affixed to each of her acts an important intention and drew up the following list, which she often reread, and presented to our Lord:

> By each sign of the cross I shall have the intention of obtaining perfect contrition;
> By each genuflection, fear and love;
> By kissing the ground, deep and sincere humility;
> By rising in the morning, mortification and love of suffering;
> By going to bed, resignation to God's will;
> By using cold water, strength to support the rigors of the religious life;
> By my meals, detachment from sensual pleasures;
> By my toilet, contempt of the world;

By every prayer, union;
By my meditation, knowledge of God;
By my conversation, the spirit of charity;
By every service rendered, kindness;
By my daily work, the love of poverty;
By my readings, the grace to be a saint;
By my mortifications, the grace to edify without knowing it;
By my fatigues, a holy death;
By my headaches, the remission of my sins;
By the recitation of the beads, a love of the Blessed Virgin;
By conversations or sermons heard, devotion to the angels and saints;
By raising my eyes, the desire of Heaven;
By the writing of letters, devotedness;
By the receiving of letters, the grace to do good to others;
By enduring cold, the shunning of sin;
By enduring heat, a love of the Eucharist;
By every word, charity;
By every look, purity;
By every sigh, love;
By every pulsation of my heart, the glory of God;
By every step, zeal.

When Marie-Anne wrote these lines the precise form of her vocation was not determined, but for a long time she had felt an attraction to reparation for sin, for she adds:

As one devoted to reparation does not belong to himself, these petitions are not made for myself alone, but for all souls, for all those

dear souls who were redeemed by the blood of my God, in order that the divine image may be restored in them.

The love which this child of seventeen had for our Lord could scarcely remain pent up in her heart. It grew in intensity daily and must, perforce, find an outlet in conversation and be communicated to others. If God had not been pleased to give her that highest and sublimest of vocations, which consists in a complete annihilation of self, Marie-Anne, with her great gifts and her ardent nature, would have exercised a wonderfully fruitful apostolate. Some proof of this may be seen in the following letter, which, no doubt, became the source and inspiration of many a prayer:

Dearest Friend:

As I have a chance of doing so this evening, let me speak to you of an idea that has occurred to me and which the shortness of this afternoon's conversation did not permit me to mention. As the idea has not yet matured in my mind, I beg earnestly of our Lord to be pleased to dictate to me Himself what I shall write to you and to enable you to understand what I may express but ill. What I have been thinking about is a union of prayers whose object would be to assist, to console, to aid, to honor Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, who is so much deserted and so much outraged *during the night.*

When the doors of the church are closed in the evening, what must be the thoughts of Jesus shut up in his tabernacle and forgotten, and seeing before Him so many long hours of a solitude that saddens Him? It is at night that

family reunions are held and the dearest intimacies enjoyed, and Jesus, who is the Head and Senior Member of the great Catholic family, is left quite alone. In our gatherings there is only One missing. It is He, yes He, our Father, Brother, Friend, Spouse, and in a spiritual sense our nearest relation, and beyond comparison the most affectionate of all. Have you thought of the length, the sadness, the solitude of those nights when in hundreds and thousands of tabernacles Jesus has not a single heart to watch with his own. What dreary nights He must have when from the depths of his prison He catches echoes from the theaters, the balls, and from all the atrocities protected by the night, and when He has near Him not a single adorer to make Him forget all this and console Him for his neglected love. And we? We go to sleep without giving it a thought.—It is this solitude, this desertion of the tabernacle, that has come home to me so forcibly. When I see the church doors closing of an evening, the thought of this abandonment which Jesus endures all the night wounds me to the heart; and the other evening I had a sort of light that I might make our Lord some compensation for this abandonment. But how go about it? Well, I thought of an offering of every moment of the night in union with Jesus thus forgotten,—of an act of adoration made before going to bed, with the thought of Jesus in all the tabernacles in the world,—of the generous and fervent offering and loving acceptance of all sleepless hours in union with Jesus watching in the tabernacle,—and of the complete offering of the entire night, leaving it to the will of the Master to make it pleasant or

the opposite, restful or painful. The thought of the tabernacle and this last offering would be repeated as often as possible, as often as one might wake during the night. Finally, the chief object in view should be a complete union with the Heart of Jesus abandoned in the Eucharist, and this through a vivid and abiding sense of the solitude which we are to fill up. . . . Many things besides would have to be done, but I believe, and am sure, that our Lord would provide for us the means of consoling his Heart, if such is his good pleasure.

If this union is proposed to those of our friends who can and will accept it, and if they in turn propose it to theirs, Jesus will have a number of true and loving consolers who will remain near Him by the union of their whole being with Him during the night, and perhaps we shall thus be able to procure Him a little glory.

At all events I submit the idea to you in the simple form in which it has occurred to me. I hope to be able to go and have a talk with you about it one of these days. Meanwhile, will you do me the favor of letting this remain a secret between us? I tell all to you, my very dear friend, as to a second self, and to one who beyond all comparison is better and holier than I, thanks be to God. I love to let you read all, to the very bottom of my heart, though I still reproach myself sometimes for not being sufficiently open and confiding with you. I have so much self-love! But it must be conquered and love of Jesus put in its place.

You will tell me frankly, won't you, what you think about this project? If you do not find it sufficiently real or practical we shall drop it

and find something else to do for the glory of our Lord.—Let us love Him more and more; and let me always love you with that tender sisterly affection which I have for you.

YOUR LITTLE MARIE-ANNE.

You can understand how this complete surrender of oneself to our Lord's will is not for the soft or the effeminate, who fear to suffer and shrink from the discomforts of the night. Hence *I* should be the first to drop out of the ranks and should not even aspire to so complete a union with our Lord in abandonment and suffering; but if I do not know, *I wish to learn;* and I have too great a desire to love our Lord not at least to try to do something for Him. What a happiness to be only the clay that holds together the stones of the foundation! May it please our Lord to at least raise a throne in his honor beneath which these foundations may disappear! May the light of Jesus shine out, and may we vanish into nought in the shade. I am sure that Jesus is pleased to see that we have heard his call to union. To write to you on this subject (must I tell you?) has cost me more than is due to mere nature, for the enemy was here, suggesting a thousand pretexts for saying nothing. At present, I am in haste to act, but to what little purpose. I am sending you all at once, thoughts, considerations, prayers, all that I have thought and written on the subject.

We cannot close this chapter more agreeably than by citing the words which this dear child wrote, on the 15th of October, on the occasion of her sending to her

sister Teresa a picture of the Virgin in the Temple, of which she was very fond. Her great secret was not known to the entire family circle, and hence it was in a very quiet way and with tears in her eyes that she presented her humble little gift to her elder sister. The nearer she felt the hour approach of last farewells, the more tender her heart became, and the memory of this last year of Marie-Anne's in the midst of her family has remained as a perfume in the minds of those who loved her.

Le Patys, October 15, 1894.

Teresa dear, you have here a very little souvenir from a little sister who loves you greatly. Later on, indeed soon, the Virgin in the Temple—or Mary as a religious—will make you think of her diminutive imitator. . . . This is perhaps the last time I shall wish you joy of your feast before quitting the world, my dear elder sister; hence I put my whole heart into it. Next year, as I most devoutly hope, you will be all assembled around the great family board at Le Patys, and far away, though near in thought, the little religious will be praying for all those she has left after her in the world. There, dear, there will be no joyous feast-day refrains, no presents, no great gatherings of friends,—nothing but the love of Christ, the great feast which we are to celebrate eternally. My dear Teresa, words are nothing; gifts are still less; the heart is everything, and with my heart I shall love you more than ever *then!* —If I venture to give you this picture, which has been so long a time in my room, it is less as a gift, which you could not value, than as a souvenir. Its very poverty will speak to you

of the little sister who has chosen forever Jesus Christ in poverty. In this I leave you my whole heart, my dearest sister, and I pray God, who is soon to separate us here below, to reunite us forever in His presence.

Chapter 6

At the close of the year 1894, Marie-Anne's thoughts were much engrossed by the question when and how to begin her cloistered life. Young as she was, she had aspired for many a year to this happy consummation. It was her abiding idea not to remain in the world beyond her eighteenth year. This period had been fixed for her by others, first on account of her health, and next with a view to her interior formation and the solidifying of her vocation. But it was now reaching its term. She would be eighteen on the 13th of May, 1895, and she must now think seriously of the last decisions. Strange as it may seem, she was unable to fix her choice. From different quarters came objections to her entering the Carmelites. Carmel had always been the goal of her desires, and yet those who knew her soul, without any exception and without any previous concert, endeavored to turn her thoughts away from it. Was it for her health they feared? Or did they think her quite unequal to enduring the solitude of Carmel? Or, considering the superb qualities of mind and heart she possessed, did they look forward to her exercising an active and external apostolate? All of these considerations were urged by her friends, with the result that poor Marie-Anne was quite at sea, with no decision in sight. One of her sisters, from whom she was separated a great part of the winter of 1894, became her confidante. The state of her mind at this period, with its hesitations and regrets, cannot be

better described than it is in the following letters, which were written under the impressions of the moment, in all the simplicity of her soul. The history of her vocation is here supplied by herself.

Le Patys, October 22, 1894.

. . . Needless, I believe, to tell you how much we miss you. We are looking for you everywhere and cannot get used to your absence.—But the good God is ever present; and what are a few months of separation when we have an eternity to live together in? I have been trying so hard for some time to fill my mind with these thoughts that I must give expression to them. One life is so short, and yet we have but one, which will be decisive for us forever.

And now, let me say a word about myself. Your poor sister (God help her!) is getting more and more perplexed and sees things less and less clearly. Just at present I am urged—and from various quarters—in the direction of Marie-Réparatrice. I am quite willing to inquire about this society. There, as elsewhere, I should be most glad to find the will of God; but as it is a long time since I gave up the idea of the Réparatrices, I am now quite out of my bearings. I think often of Carmel, as you well know, but I cannot speak to any one of Carmel without meeting with cold looks or evasive gestures. But why? I know well: it is because every one thinks that, although I have a certain fund of spirits, which may be good in itself and may keep me up for a while, I have not enough virtue, enough energy, enough of a mortified spirit, to enter Carmel. They don't feel sure of me. So I am quite alone in think-

ing as I do, and in the midst of this isolation they set before my eyes the mild radiance of Marie-Réparatrice. What the outcome of it will be I cannot say. I resign myself as much as possible to the will of the good God. Would it be possible for you to procure for me the notices of the first four Mothers of which you spoke to me one day, or any other documents bearing on the subject? M—— is looking for the life of Mother Mary of Jesus. Indeed I am keeping every one busy. What a heap of prayers I shall owe later on to all those holy persons who have taken pity on me. And in paying this debt I shall be niggard neither of my time nor of my heart's devotion. Pray for me and pardon me for having said so much about myself.

November 22, 1894.

My dear, thanks, most heartfelt thanks, for your letter. All that tends to enlighten me, all that is wise, clear and decided,—as indeed is all that you say to me,—is for me bread from Heaven. If I am to see things clearly I need to have them set in a clear light. I am too blind in regard to certain matters, too extravagant in my appreciation of things, to judge soundly. When I am shown the truth, even if it is just the opposite of what I have hitherto thought, I have so lively a sense of it that I at once say, "It is true—they are right," and I face completely about. I am pretty much like a blind man who sees by the eyes of others; but how happy I am to see by the eyes of a Père X, or of a brother, a sister, a friend, such as I have. Without them I don't know what I should do.

I entirely agree with you and I think I must now make up my mind. As God has not allowed any obstacles to stand in the way of my going, I feel the time has quite arrived for coming to a decision. It is easy to say as much, but the decision is as difficult as it can be. There must be no mistaking the way on which I am to enter. My life depends upon the decision to be made this winter. Of course, I reckon on help from our Lord and on the all-powerful influence of his grace, but as it is not to be supposed that God will send an angel to enlighten me all of a sudden as to the divine will, I must not allow myself to fall asleep, but rather with the aid of the angels of the earth seek everywhere to know his will.

At a time when I was the merest girl and had less experience, I looked forward to an irresistible call from on high. I have learned well since that such a call does not fall to the lot of all, and that many souls must seek for a long time and in the midst of a thousand difficulties for the "clefts in the rock" and the "hollow places in the wall" which are the object of their desires. But in this, as in all things else, may the will of God be done. *Non recuso laborem.*[1] What I need is to be certain that I am in the right way, and this certainly I doubt not I shall arrive at one day, with God's grace.

At present, among all the religious orders, two in particular are proposed for my choice,—two divergent paths lie open before me, one of which is probably the right one.

I admire the good judgment shown in your

[1] I decline not the labor.—*St. Martin of Tours.*

remarks upon Carmel. I know, I feel, the truth of all that you say about it, and yet with every fibre of my heart I cling to that dear Carmel which seems to me the consummation of all my desires as a child, the fulfilment of all my aspirations of later years. I have no great fear of the mortifications of Carmel,—I wrote the same thing even yesterday morning, before receiving your letter,—but what I fear is that solitude of the heart, of the soul, of the body, of the mind, and of everything in me which has need of expansion, of physical life. Everything in Carmel *pleases* me, but not everything, I believe, *suits* me. My ardent love for Saint Teresa perhaps counts for much in my love for her order; and (must I make this avowal?) the simple thought which came to me yesterday, namely, "Be a Teresa at Marie-Réparatrice," made me at once accept with more resignation the idea of not being able to enter Carmel. And, still another avowal (is it a trial? Possibly, and even probably), but my indifference toward Marie-Réparatrice increases the more I am urged to embrace it. I hope it is a good sign. If I enter there, it will be entirely against my feelings, which may be too natural and human. If I listened to myself I would cast to the winds all I hear said of Marie-Réparatrice and bury my face in my hands and cry out, "Carmel, Carmel, my dear Carmel!" It is my reason alone that makes me study and understand the spirit of the Réparatrices. It was exceedingly kind of you to send me the brochures relating to them. I am going to *dissect* them and try and be penetrated with them to the marrow of my bones. At least I want to do

everything to get light, and then if no light comes it will be through no fault of mine. As to the sojourn in Paris at the *rue de Naples,* that, my dear, might prove a real blessing. I have long desired to make such a retreat in a convent, and now the more so if it is to be in my *own* convent of the future. We shall think it over and speak about it again after I have made a little progress.

Finally, my dear sister, you see how I need to be enlightened by every one and how much good your own suggestions do me. Your letter was a ray of light. A fortnight ago I received a letter from M——, who warmly encouraged me to make a study of Marie-Réparatrice. A few months ago, after my last retreat, Père de M—— said to me, "I believe you are called to Marie-Réparatrice." I said to myself: "A Jesuit's advice! Père de M—— has been chaplain of the Réparatrices—that's clear!" But who knows? He saw, perhaps, further than I; and maybe it shows a great callousness of heart to thrust aside with both hands a society toward which everybody is urging me. Should my indifference be so thorough as not to yield to the convincing words of my friend M——, whom I am accused of listening to over readily? M. L. had last year the same antipathy toward the Auxiliatrices: there is consolation in that.

You now have my ideas, hastily put together. They have not been sufficiently reflected upon to have taken form. In a few days I shall write to you with more mature judgment what I think about the papers you have sent to me on Marie-Réparatrice. Pray for me in the meantime to the meek Virgin, who equally at Carmel and at

the *rue de Naples* is Queen of the order. There is so much prayer offered for me everywhere that I feel great confidence.

. . . God forever and in all things! What saints we should be if we loved our Lord as He ought to be loved. Sweet remembrances, thanks, union in the sacred Hearts. . . .

December 7, 1894.

I am pleased to have to sacrifice to God my petty inclinations in regard to painting. Léon Besnardeau used to say about music, "What is a sound, even a beautiful one, compared with a single thought given to God?" I am quite ready to say the same of painting. The sacrifice of art to our Lord, who is Harmony by his essence and Harmony all divine, is a small sacrifice indeed as compared with others, but the heart is radiant with joy at having to make it. We shall sing better up above.

I must ask you, dear, to pray particularly for me to-morrow. It will be forty years since the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed, and you are aware that it is the very day on which Mme. d'Hoogworst said to the Blessed Virgin the *fiat* which brought her enterprise into being. The Immaculate will perhaps ask me to-morrow for my *fiat,* and I trust I shall obtain an answer, or at least a special grace, on this double anniversary. I am buried in serious study. Oh! pray for me!

What was God's answer to this confident appeal of Marie-Anne? We have reasons for thinking that it was

not yet very clear. Long months were to pass before a decided state of mind and the joy that accompanies it were to be the portion of our future religious. But during this long period of uncertainty Marie Immaculate, by obtaining peace for her, consoled the anxiety of her child. Her director had seen clearly and for a sufficiently long time the place destined for Marie-Anne, but it required gentle guidance to bring this soul whose one thought was of Carmel to will and choose what God willed and desired.

The Christmas season glided peacefully by. Little by little her attraction for Marie-Réparatrice increased. She read and often reread with delight the life of Valentine Riant. The strong soul of that young religious, who had cast a spell over so many, was weaving a charm for one who was to resemble her in so many respects. But thus far it was only through books that Marie-Anne had had any chance of becoming acquainted with the Réparatrices. It is a very notable circumstance connected with her vocation that she saw the habit of her order for the first time during her retreat of probation, which makes it clear that no human influences were at work. It was only the voice of grace which she heard in the bottom of her heart. What the poor child felt most keenly was the nearness of the day of her departure. Those who have had the same painful experience will realize what she had to endure, but they, too, and they alone will be sensible of the heavenly joys that made up for it all. The following letters will exhibit the various movements that swayed her soul without troubling it, just as a strong wind bends the branches of a tree without disturbing the roots, fixed firmly in the soil.

December 16, 1894.

. . . It may seem incredible that the nearer I come to the time for leaving you all, the more I love you. Is it not folly to bind oneself with such strong chains to what one must presently relinquish? I forge with my own hands the sword that severs us; but it is stronger than I; for in these last months I feel the need of loving more deeply and more tenderly, leaving the more violent crushing of feeling till later. I believe it is always thus. Our Lord gives us proof of it in the most tender and affectionate of his discourses, that of the Last Supper. Our Lord was about to die . . . the religious life is a death also, but a happy death, which leads to the life of Heaven.

December 31, 1894.

My dear little one, a happy, happy New Year —and a holy one! My wish is that this happy year may fill you with joy, but above all I wish with my whole soul that it may see you make such progress in the love of our Lord that it may count for a year of Heaven. I wish—oh, so many things! But our Lord above all, his love above all loves, his glory above all our sufferings and all our joys—this is the happiness, the one happiness, that I can and shall desire for you, because it contains all others. How closely united we shall be to-morrow. What thoughts we shall have about one another on this first day of a year which may bring great things in its train!

Oh, let me tell you of the delight that fills me, here at the dawn of a year that is to see me—happy, thrice-happy child—receive the veil I have so much desired and leave all for the

Lord! A few months more, and the change will have been made. For my part, I shall have given all, my mother, my dear little sisters and brothers, all that I love and all that I am attached to; and for this all, which is so little in truth, our Lord will have given me his most precious treasure. My heart suffers,—but let me not speak of my heart, for it *should* feel the wound,—but my soul is rejoiced and I greet with a smile this blessed 1895, which has in store for me such great graces. Ah! how good our Lord is!

I am sending you, my dear, a very poor little picture which I have painted—badly painted, I am sorry to say—for you. It contains the emblems of Marie-Réparatrice, which I love and which I am sure you love also. Let us plant the cross in our hearts and make the lily blossom by its side. As to the Victim of the Host, what shall I say? Let us transform ourselves into Him—into Jesus as He is in the tabernacle, hidden and annihilated.

January 5, 1895.

. . . Yesterday morning, at the catechists' Mass, it was "poor I" that played the accompaniment. And how I wilted under it! But if it was not pleasant it was a service rendered, whether self-love liked it or not. If I were very humble I should be glad at striking a false note, but I haven't got that far. Our meeting was very interesting; the work is prospering at present; membership is large, the patronages are well conducted and we have funds. I go to Saint-Laud, where our children are good and know their catechism well.

I cannot tell you anything very new about my going to the convent. In a general way, all is decided, but a question of detail may spoil our plans. In gazing at things about me I say to myself that I am looking at them for the last time. Many persons are perhaps astonished to see me follow them with a lingering look. Poor dear friends! they do not know that I am saying to myself, "I shall never see them again." Would I were possessed of a hardier nature, and were not the soft weak child that I am. Affection in my case soon turns to sensibility, and I suffer in consequence once and a half more than I ought. I should learn to let myself be crushed. Have I told you that the Father does not want any mention to be made of my going, not only now but even when all is decided and arranged. He wants to exempt me from the *ah*'s, the *oh*'s and the *alas*'s, which I don't care for. Mamma, M—— and my dear little sister must keep it all to themselves.

Now that I have the time, I must go and say a right good pair of beads in honor of Saint Anthony, who has helped me to find—I forget what it was. Ah! it was my pocketbook.

January 19, 1895.

My darling, thanks for your dear letter, which gave me great pleasure and the best of proofs that you are not forgetting the little religious. I assure you that she loves you, and more than ever, and that her love is the greater since she began to learn to love only through our Lord and in his Sacred Heart. How much better is such love. I am a happy, very happy child, and I assure you that I bless the Lord for the lot He

has vouchsafed me. My dear and holy M—— portrays my happiness in words that set my heart on fire; and for the rest, I myself feel what a spoiled child of grace I am and how great has been the goodness of our Lord to me, who have been preserved so young from the *dust of the world,* which, alas! penetrates hearts the best sheltered from it. But I must make fitting return to our Lord; and I do not mean to be mediocre in religion, as I have been in the world. I want true sanctity, and I want to know how by the grace of God to triumph over nature. I assure you, I do not, just at present, *feel* very much the prospect of my going. Feeling will return perhaps, but just at present the thought of my happiness predominates over the pain of separation. There is a great advantage in this, as it leaves my heart and my soul more free.

February 22, 1895.

. . . Ah! my dear, there will be a time and a place which will re-unite us all; and then, no fear of separation, no imperfection in any one, no disquiet of soul!—Without Jesus what should we be? What would become of us? But He is so good, and it is so delicious to be his spoiled child and to be taken up in his arms, with the assurance that one will be carried by them with so much love and with such marvelous tenderness! . . . Let us, then, give and return something of ourselves. This exhortation is addressed to myself, who have so much need of it. If you but knew what a happiness it is to think that one is going to give himself wholly and entirely, or at least that there will be nothing left of oneself in the world. My dear,

how much I love you! How I long to see you again! Let us love the good God with all our hearts, and after Him, one another.

March, 1895.

. . . Often also the heart is crushed and I see things through a mist of tears. But—no, no, no! *Gaudete semper!*[1] I should like to see the sacrifice over and past, but these last months of waiting and anguish have great value for Heaven and I am glad of them. A Dieu! Let us love one another more and more and Jesus above all.

By this time she had been sufficiently won over to Marie-Réparatrice to write as follows to her mother, who was then at Lourdes:—

Mamma dear, how our thoughts are turning to you to-day! How we are with you in spirit at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin! If I could only kneel with you and offer to our Lady of Lourdes my vocation and place under her protection this blessed year of my departure and our separation, that I may comport myself bravely and with real merit. But I know you will have thought of this, Mamma dear, and I confide to your heart this mission to my Mother in Heaven. How much more I love her now that I am going to become another Mary, a Mary for Jesus, for my neighbor, for my family as well. Everything about us, even our habit, should make a second Mary of each of us; and this thought of being a Mary for Jesus

[1] Rejoice (in the Lord) always.—*St. Paul.*

and for souls is the charm of our vocation. Have you noticed that Our Lady of Lourdes wears the habit of the Réparatrices,—the white gown, the blue cincture,—and that she chose this costume only a short while after Mother Mary of Jesus prescribed it for her daughters. This was our Blessed Lady's sanction and a sign that she blessed and approved of this choice of her livery. Six months from now, Mamma dear, and I shall be in her blessed house. Each day that passes brings me nearer to it, and I can hardly believe that such is to be my happy lot. Poor, poor girls in the world! If I could only bring them all to follow in the footsteps of the Master. At least, may our Lord be pleased to choose some from among my sisters.

Her letters to her friends show the same joy and sorrow mingled together in an undefinable harmony. All the tenderness of her heart finds expression in the following letter, written to one whom she had known to have been a long time afflicted:—

. . . My poor dear friend, you can imagine how I am grieved to see you ever tormented, always suffering, in one way or another. I moan to God that He does not vouchsafe you even a little repose; and I am quite sad when I find myself enjoying peace and calm but am aware that there are some very dear souls about me who, like yourself, are suffering without any respite. How willingly would I suffer in their place! However, it is impossible that this should last indefinitely. There must be a change. . . . I must constrain our Lord to make you happy, or at least calm. These four

years ought to be enough to slake the thirst of Jesus crucified to be glorified in you by your sufferings; and I must hope, I must believe, that the hour of your deliverance is at hand. When Marie-Anne will be no longer of the world, may God bestow upon you, my dear friend, all the peace and joy that would have been her portion if she had remained in the world; or, rather, may He give you a share in the joys of her religious life. After all, we are on the way to Heaven—we have before us an eternity of joy. It behooves us to suffer; but still it is hard. Let us pray, united in heart and will with Jesus.

In a letter to Mlle. de X, who was always much in her confidence, her joy again finds expression.

April 25, 1895.

Yes, our Lord is good to me—too good. He spoils me, and I have such intimate experience of his love that I feel utterly confounded by so much of it on his part and so much ingratitude on mine. I make to Him every instant the sacrifice of all that I love and all that I am so soon to give up.

April 21, 1895.

I beg Jesus to spare me no part of the bitterness of my leaving home. The one favor I ask is that I may not shed tears, and thus not draw tears from others. Ask this grace with me, for I believe it to be very important. I have arrived at one of those moments when one has an intense hunger for holiness. The greater my sense of misery the greater is my hope in the grace of our dear Lord. I am willing to suffer,

to suffer my whole life long, but I shall be a saint.

Toward the opening of spring, as the time drew near for leaving town and returning to Le Patys, where important questions could less easily be settled, it was decided that Marie-Anne should enter the convent toward the Feast of the Assumption. Her pulse quickened at the announcement; and the following letter to her sister will give us an insight into her feelings.

March 26, 1895.

. . . I often need to be cheered up, and you can do that to perfection. More than four months and a half, and the time passes so quickly, so quickly! I still feel as though it were not *forever* I was going to be away from home, and that a day will come when I shall resume my place in the family. But no. . . . God alone! God knows so well how to make Himself *all* to us that there is nothing to be lamented in our lot; on the contrary, what a grace, what a happiness! We are only too happy, we whom God has chosen. I assure you, I do not fear to see the days slip away, and if nature gives a sigh or a moan, the heart at least is steeped in a joy that no sadness can disturb. I can say with Valentine Riant: "I suffer, but I love still more, and I believe that the secret of what I feel is contained in one word—Jesus!" When our Lord takes anything with one hand, He gives twice as much with the other. How can we respond to such generosity? Oh! if you knew how unworthy I feel! I don't fear tiring you, dear, by speaking so often and at such length

on this subject so dear to me. No one, it seems to me, can understand what leaving for the convent life really means if one has not had experience of it; but it is good, nevertheless, to be able to say to the world, "I know thy happiness full well." I assure you, I should care nothing for the greatest happiness on earth outside the religious life, nor should I exchange for it a single moment of that ineffable union with our Lord.

April 3, 1895.

We are just back from the funeral of Mother Mary of the Assumption, at l'Esvières. What help she must have received in her dying hours from the numerous prayers offered for her. There was nothing really sad about her death. Such a death is to be envied rather than feared. We went yesterday to see her as she lay in state in the community room. There was an expression of holiness and calm in her features, and one might have thought she was only sleeping. How quickly all things pass! One more has been added to those we have known who have gone to eternity. Man's life has wings.

Easter, 1895.

My dear, why are you not with us on this bright Easter Day? I wish so much you were. It seems that one or other of us must be absent from our rejoicings, and now our gatherings will not be complete except in Heaven. Let us hasten on to our reunion there. This morning we had a fine Mass, with communion. But the hymns chosen were poor and the accompanying no less so. I hope the angels in Heaven sang them to a different tune and that God heard no

singing but theirs. Oh! how I should like to be with them!

April 17, 1895.

My dear, I shall write you but one little word, and that on my knees, as Catherine is making me a hat and I am serving as a lay figure. . . . The days here are all alike. . . . That is all which is distinctive in them that I can see. I spend a good part of my time in gardening. I am fond of it, because as the mind is free during that occupation I can think a great deal about God. I find pleasure in thinking of the little garden at Nazareth and of the happy flowers planted by our Lord's own hand. For the rest, these plants which I am now setting in the ground I shall not see in full bloom. What a joy it is to think that they do not need much time to grow, and yet I shall be in the house of the good God before they are in flower! . . . The lunch-bell is ringing. Catherine has finished and I have only time to embrace you, but yet so tenderly! . . .

April 24, 1895.

. . . Courage! this will pass quickly, and the end of it all will be Heaven! When one thinks of the infinite perfection of God, of the ravishing beauty of our Blessed Lady, of the graces of the angels and saints, and can say to himself that one day all this will be ours and that our souls will be flooded with the same incomprehensible happiness as all our beloved brethren in heaven, how can life be insupportable, however bitter it may be? "Everything is short that has an end."[1] I believe I could easily, with Saint

[1] Saint Augustine.

Teresa, die of not dying if I did not see before me the vast field of God's glory to be cultivated, and above all if I did not feel how far I am from the perfection to which I have been called. I believe it is one of the great graces of the religious life to die without any regret, because the ties of earth have not been left to death to sever. We tend but to death, the holiest death possible,—often, too, the earliest possible! We know well that our life is useful to God only so far as He wills, and that when He wills to take it from us we shall leave no void behind us and our place will be filled by others, "just as one broken pane of glass is replaced by another." What peace, what simple trust, these thoughts should breed in us.

May 12, 1895.

. . . Oh! that *loi d'accroissement!*[1] I wish so much they would make martyrs of *us!* I fear they will, unfortunately, not go as far as that; but would not even this slender chance draw one to the convent? Think of it! You have only to be beheaded to go, without passing through Purgatory, straight to Heaven! Think of giving God the greatest possible proof of love and an infinite glory, of giving a Saint to the Church and to one's family, and finally (an insignificant motive, though a just one), of causing the invocation to be said to the end of time, *Saint Marie-Anne, pray for us!* The very thought of it might well make one die of desire. Oh! pray that we may resist to the very end and that we may know how to suffer and to die!

[1] Literally, *law of increase*,—a proposed law bearing hard upon religious.

> . . . Good-by, dear, and pray that the time for my retreat, which I so much desire, may be decided upon. Pray that Saint Anthony may help me to find my watch before the fifteenth, though that would be a great miracle. Pray above all that I may be a saint,—a still greater miracle,—and tell my Mother of Lourdes, as you are now at her feet, what passionate love I have for her. Are you aware that I shall be eighteen on Monday? What length of days I have reached! I am quite worn out! . . .

This last letter shows that Marie-Anne's final decision was near at hand. Gently directed and, in a manner, borne for nearly a year in the direction of Marie-Réparatrice, she was, nevertheless, a little undecided. Her director advised a retreat in one of the houses of the Réparatrices, as the surest way of getting to know their way of life and becoming attached to it, if such were God's will. The house at Le Mans was the nearest one to Angers, and thither it was thought advisable to send her. As Père X was to pay a visit there, he would speak of his penitent to the Mother Superior and ask for the favor which she desired. On his arrival he very likely drew such a portrait of Marie-Anne as needed no idealizing to make a good impression on the Superior, for a most hearty welcome was extended at once to his young charge. The decisive hour was thus very close at hand. God, who directs all things, did not will that Mme. Hervé-Bazin, who was ill at the time, should in person conduct her daughter to a superior unknown to both and to a society no less unknown. Except for an escort given her for pure form's sake, Marie-Anne was alone when she left home, and she was alone when she knocked—with

what heart-beating we can imagine—at the door whose threshold she was afterward to cross with such joy of heart. We shall let her describe the keen emotions experienced during these first days at the Réparatrice.

May 25, 1895.

Dearest Mamma, here I am at last with my dear Réparatrices. And how kind they are! I have just been to see the Mother Superior, and how heavenly she was beneath her great blue veil! She embraced me with true religious tenderness and pressed me in her arms. After a journey through the city which seemed an age long I arrived at the house and was received by the charming Mother Portress, who directed me into the parlor. The Reverend Mother Superior came a little later. She gave me her hand in welcome, and I felt quite encouraged. A moment or two later we went upstairs to a nice room which bears the name of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. We talked about a quarter of an hour. I am delighted with this kind Mother Superior, who is very, very pale, but whose eyes have a charming expression.—I believe I shall not feel fatigued. I am not to rise before six, and to-morrow morning I am to meditate for only three quarters of an hour. The retreat will be entirely private. We number about fourteen or fifteen and are privileged to have the instructions in the community chapel.—I wish I had my dear elder sisters with me. I am completely happy and should like to be here forever.

May 26, 1895.

. . . I believe it would be impossible to describe my happiness, which entirely surpasses any that the world can give and is every way

superior to those paltry earthly joys which are so much contemned here. My "visitor" is a young Mother who is quite heavenly. She comes to see me several times a day and speaks so beautifully about God that I feel my heart inflamed. God is the one object of her love; and how she does love Him. As to the Mother Superior, she is to me a living reflection of the good God. Possessing our Lord's own gentleness, she could make one rise above the whole world. When she asks a question it is such a happiness to answer, "Yes, Mother." And I believe if she asked me to throw myself into the fire, I should do it,—feeling perfectly sure that it was for the good God.—Every one recommends to me a care of the *envelope*, as well as of the soul enclosed in it, in order that I may return to you as sprightly as possible. I do not tire myself at all.

Pray hard for me and get others to pray hard. The great moment when I am to ask seriously and categorically to be admitted is drawing near, and it must absolutely be the good God that will dispose in my favor the heart of Very Reverend Mother General. I get many prayers here. My visitor (called my "Guardian Angel") gave me her communion this morning; and what an angelic communion! She never goes into the chapel without pronouncing my name. The Mother Superior is kind enough to pray much also, and so I have confidence. "When our Lord wants anything," she said to me this evening, "his creatures have but one thing to choose. So—confidence!" And indeed my hopes point to happiness; and so great is the happiness predicted for me by

others that I cannot bring myself to believe it is so real or so near at hand.

Ah! if I could make you, dear Mamma, and my sisters taste of the happiness of these days of retreat! It is Heaven's own happiness. The greatest possible charity reigns among the retreatants. We know one another only in God, but that is everything. My little next-door neighbor—a girl who is to leave here in a few days to be a postulant—is very meek and gentle. If I am received, I am certain to make my novitiate at Toulouse, and to begin, if possible, in October. This, it seems, is the best time in the year to become habituated to the South.

A Dieu, Mamma dear: I love you in Jesus much more and much better than before.

May 29, 1895.

Dearest Mamma, I am going to ask you a favor, if it is possible for you to grant it. Could you come yourself to see me home? I should like to make you and Reverend Mother Superior acquainted. I want also to give you an idea of our life during these blessed days and let you have a glimpse of the happy life of these religious, such as we get by observing it through the grille, but most of all by contact with these excellent Mothers themselves. I believe it would do you good to see what your child is called to, and how great a grace our Lord gives her in the call. You would understand why I want to fly to the convent, and how this union with our Lord Jesus which we feel during this happy retreat gives me wings wherewith to soar to the summits of the religious life,—which is a life of sacrifice, but a life of love. I should like to

show you a little corner of Heaven. It is a dream of mine to have you here. If it cannot be realized, let us think no more about it; if it can, I shall be grateful to our Lord. You would see how well they know how to be good here.

To those who may still doubt if this happy girl was not under the influence of a passing wave of enthusiasm, our answer shall consist in a transcription of some of the notes she took down during her retreat. It will doubtless astonish the reader to see so much lucidity of mind, so much rectitude of judgment, and such well-balanced exercise of the reason amidst the ardors of love. Well indeed did the child who wrote these lines understand both the divine call of which she was the object and the special form which it assumed in her vocation to Marie-Reparatrice.

I need to suffer; I wish to suffer, because Jesus Christ suffered for me, . . . because suffering is the saving of those who are being lost through luxury and sloth, . . . because God asks it in expiation of the crimes of the world. . . . I wish to suffer because suffering is the most powerful form of prayer, . . . because suffering purifies, because it élevates. . . . I wish to suffer because happiness is found in suffering and my soul craves true happiness. *Non mori, sed pati.*[1] To suffer—yes, to suffer for a century, if need be,—in order to save souls and glorify God.

I desire the cloister because there I shall be separated from the world, . . . and I shrink, as I do from fire, from the least contact with the world. . . . In the cloister I shall only hear

[1] Not to die, but to suffer.—*St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi.*

God spoken of. . . . I shall taste the delights of a solitary cell to which God alone will come to visit his servant, who will suffer for his glory and immolate herself every moment of the day by prayer and expiation.

. . . . . .

I desire the cloister because there one lives essentially by prayer, and I have need of continual prayer. . . . It is the soul's strength, it is our one means of salvation, it is the key of Heaven. Prayer unites one with Jesus, aids one to endure all for his glory. Prayer is the sister of Suffering; and the two unite to offer themselves to God and save the world. Jesus did not separate them, either in his hidden life, or in the desert, or in his passion, or on the cross. . . . He prayed without ceasing: I wish to combine a life of suffering with a life of prayer.

I desire poverty, because it was the inseparable companion of my Saviour Jesus, who embraced it from his birth and did not relinquish it till his death on the cross. It re-tempers and strengthens the soul. Poverty is an invigorating draught, whilst riches pall upon the taste. . . . It detaches one from the world and from all that is created. . . . I desire poverty because the world hates it and I hate the world.

A Réparatrice should know *for Whom* she makes reparation, as well as *why* and *how* she should make it: she need not know in particular *what* she is making up for. Every offence against God, of whatsoever kind or whencesoever arising, wounds her heart, because it smites the Heart of Jesus. We shall know well enough, alas! by our experience of the world

that God is offended. . . . We shall feel it by the shock given our souls, in which Jesus dwells, by souls from which He is absent. . . . Innumerable offences are committed everywhere about us which must not infect our own souls in the slightest degree. . . . We belong to Jesus; He will be *in* us, and He will make use of us in giving Himself to others.

At Marie-Réparatrice, three ideas which charmed my piety in childhood days are found realized: *Prayer, love, suffering.* Later on, it will be *love, suffering, death . . . death!* That will be the last, the supreme degree of reparation; and without doubt it will mark the best and brightest day of my life. . . . *Never enough suffering, never enough love, never enough purity of heart, to* MAKE REPARATION. . . . Hence, what a struggle against myself! We shall never die enough! O Jesus, make me die without ceasing! . . .

. . . . . .

The Society of Marie-Réparatrice comprises all that I shall love henceforth. I am captivated, transformed, by the spirit revealing itself in everything here. What depth! What broadness! What greatness of range and what precision in detail! This spirit includes everything and leaves the soul all its liberty. It is only God that could have inspired it. Everything pleases me. I wish to be a true child of Marie-Réparatrice, and a brave and courageous one. It is this spirit that will sanctify me. I never knew it or understood it before.

After her retreat, arrangements were made for Marie-Anne's admission into the Society of Marie-Réparatrice.

As the French novitiate was at Toulouse and the summer heat there oppressive for those not born in that climate, Marie-Anne's departure was put off till the autumn. Thus she had a few months more to spend with her family. Such intervals are at once harrowing and delicious; they are filled with joy and filled with suffering, both for the future religious and for those who are dear to her. How fleeting the hours which are a martyrdom to mothers and at the same time their greatest glory, which are a prelude to the sacrifice which is soon to be consummated, and at the same time the dawn of the great day which is to give one virgin more to Jesus Christ, on earth and in Heaven! On returning from Le Mans, Marie-Anne wrote to her eldest sister:

June 2, 1895.

My dearest, what shall I write about but my great happiness? I have been so happy during these eight days of my retreat that I could not believe that so much bliss was to be mine forever. God alone is *true;* He alone is capable of giving true joy and perfect serenity. Oh! how He is loved in those blessed houses in one of which I have been allowed to spend a few days! Jesus, seated on his throne, attracts all hearts. One feels himself drawn to Him, and it becomes all but impossible to live far from Him. . . . You know our convents; you know what kindness, what charity, reigns in them. I cannot describe to you the care, the tenderness, the maternal and the sisterly kindness, that were lavished upon me. No wonder that Jesus is still keeping a part of me there, near to Himself and to Marie-Réparatrice. My being is now incom-

plete, and will be so till I have found that part of it, which Jesus will not return to me till I have made the sacrifice of all you dear ones which I owe to Him. Pray that these last hours of mine in the world, which I fear so much, may contribute to my sanctification. I recommend myself to all possible prayers, that I may become a true Réparatrice,—which is no small matter.

June 8, 1895.

To have lived so close to Jesus is to be disgusted with the world and to find no longer any attraction but in Him who is the one King of our hearts. And how powerfully He does attract! The world can give no happiness which can in the least compare with the smallest degree of happiness bestowed by Jesus. And as the joys which He gives are obtained by sacrifice, which we are always capable of making, it is always possible to be happy. This is the great secret of the joy of the religious life, a joy so real, so deep, so pure. Bless the Lord Jesus with me, my dear Teresa, and pray that I may be generous to the last.

July 10, 1895.

. . . The thought of leaving home produces in me two effects diametrically opposite to each other. When I think of you I am a fountain of tears, and when I think of my little sisters of the novitiate, I am all sunlight. May our Lord enable me to find the just mean. When found, it will be like the rainbow, rising so grand, so pure, so luminous, so calm, between the sun and the rain.

Meanwhile, she does not forget her great friend, to whom she unbosoms herself in the following letters:—

I must tell you, I am a spoiled child. All within me is a divine grace, and an immense one. But I don't want to behave like a spoiled child, and I hope to be able to give something to our Lord. . . . Have you been at the *rue de Naples?* Oh, how I should like to go there with you! I think I would kiss its very walls.

June 6, 1895.

There is no describing to you the present state of my feelings. I am at once happy and sad; I am singing alleluias in the midst of tears and smiling in the midst of sobbing. Everything causes suffering; my family attracts me in one direction, the convent in another; but above this struggle stands Jesus smiling, and my soul is lighted up with happiness. I feel that unmixed happiness is impossible now, before the moment of the last sacrifice, and that everything during this month will be painful to me, because my heart finds itself whole and entire nowhere. But I wish to accept the will of our Lord Jesus, embracing it with love, and I bless Him for knowing so well how to make me suffer.

September 5, 1895.

Don't compassionate me: there is infinite sweetness in the tears which Jesus draws and which He Himself wipes away, in his delicious love. I love them as worldlings love their jewels, and the more they oppress the heart the more precious I find them, because they please the more Him whom I love.

How good our Lord is! He knows so well how to console me in the midst of my anguish, that I am more than happy. I wish He would

> crush me still more—that He would break me in pieces. . . .
>
> How good it is to suffer, and how happy are the victims! How can we refuse anything whatever to our sweet Jesus? Let us be crucified with Jesus crucified. Spouses of the Cross, let us embrace it with our whole soul.

The summer wore on, and the month of August saw the birth, at Le Patys itself, of a little niece, who in Marie-Anne's eyes was to take her place in the family group. It was beside the crib of this infant and in the midst of her family, all of whose living members were now assembled for the last time on earth, that the postulant saw the days glide by rapidly that were leading up to her departure. She was now in the full flower of her youth and possessed of virtues whose further ripening needed the shelter of the cloister. During this period she began each day with long morning prayers in the chapel, and later she returned to the chapel, to tidy it and fill it with flowers. She came and went, seldom without humming a verse of a hymn, with her bouquets in her hands and a smile on her lips. Diminutive in size, with her hair slightly crisped and forming a nimbus about a visage which had nothing remarkable save its expression, —quick of movement and no less so in the glance of her brilliant dark eyes,—utterly indifferent to dress, so much so that it became a matter of reproach to herself,—always cheerful and meek, she seemed as perfect as a girl could be. She spoke but little of the coming event, in order not to pain those about her; but she thought of it continually, and despite the infinite tenderness she felt for those she was about to leave forever, it was plain that her heart had already parted with them all and was living

elsewhere. As Toulouse was at such a distance, and Mme. Hervé-Bazin not quite at liberty to leave her other children alone, it was suggested that she accompany her daughter as far as Le Mans, where certain religious who were about to set out for the novitiate would take her in charge, and the suggestion was received with favor.

Marie-Anne was to quit Le Patys on Sunday, the 22nd of September, 1895. The evening before, after taking her last walk, she sat on a bench in the garden, and as she gazed upon this dear nest of her childhood she murmured: "How pretty Le Patys is! . . . I haven't had the courage to go as far as the little wood!" She remained a long time silent, feeding her eyes upon a scene which she was never to behold again; and then, as darkness fell, the hour for evening prayer in common saw the eight children once more gathered about their mother. The chapel was illuminated as for a great feast, and a profusion of roses shed their fragrance about the altar. Without a tremor Marie-Anne's voice mingled with the others, and it was she who intoned the *Magnificat,* which she had requested to have sung. Finally, before leaving the modest sanctuary where so often her soul had been elevated to God, she threw herself at her mother's feet. Though trembling with emotion, she succeeded in saying: "Pardon me, Mamma. . . . I have been so bad! . . . I thank you for all you have done for me. . . . Bless me, in your name and in father's."

Before going to sleep she must again go and embrace her mother. She knelt beside her bed and could not restrain herself from saying, "I shall never see you this way again!" The next morning she appeared with her rosary around her neck and her crucifix on her breast. It was in the chapel that she wished to bid farewell to her

mother, and there leave her, as it were, at the feet of our Lord. In spite of her determination nature would have its way, and when, on leaving the chapel, she lighted on her little niece Magdalen, the newborn, she sobbed aloud as she embraced her. "It is for the good God, Mamma," she exclaimed; "it is for the good God! I must go and bid good-by to my dear little room." On reaching it she threw herself at our Lady's feet, and in a moment, feeling strengthened in soul, she went down to the parlor. They were all awaiting her there, and after embracing brothers and sisters, and saying a word from the heart to each of them, she went out and took her place in the carriage.

This was the sorest part of her trial that day. Her heart felt crushed; she broke out into sobs. The carriage wheeled off, and as they passed through the gate she turned and made the sign of the cross in the air with her crucifix, saying, "Oh! may God watch over my dear Patys!" At a turn in the road her mother said to her, "Lean over and take another look."—"It is for the good God, Mamma," she replied. And she looked at her crucifix through her tears. As they were nearing the station, she said: "You will tell my Uncle René Bazin that I thank him for this dear crucifix. Tell him that it has aided me in making the sacrifice. . . . How blue the sky is, Mamma. It is rejoicing with us. It is of the same color as my veil. . . . It was on a Sunday that I was born, and it is on a Sunday that our Lord is taking me back to Himself. . . . You will bid good-by for me to everybody. . . . I offer the greatest part of my sacrifice for my father and for the intentions which you know about. . . . You will tell our friends of the Salmonière that I shall not forget them.—That I could not give ex-

pression to it, but that I love them and am sorry to leave them. Tell Mme. de la P—— I shall pray for her and for her intentions. . . ."

On reaching Segré and getting aboard the train, she became once more calm and serene. During the whole journey her eyes remained fixed upon her mother's: she could not turn them away upon any other object. When Le Mans came in sight, her looks betrayed a little alarm. "Oh! here we are! There, Mamma, behind the cathedral! . . ."

On entering the convent they found the Mother Superior and Marie-Anne's confessor waiting to greet them. The latter were soon on their way to the chapel with the little one in white, the new elect of the Lord. For the last time she sank at her mother's feet, who resigned her, happy with the happiness of the saints, to the care of her who was henceforth to take her place with her child. One last kiss, and all was over! . . . The door closed upon her, never again to let her pass its threshold! . . . Who is it that gives such courage to mothers? Who gives a like courage to their children? What is it that severs the strongest and most sacred of ties, if it be not the love of Jesus? a love incomprehensible to those who have not tasted of it, a love which is irresistible to those who are favored by it,—a jealous love that will abide no division of the heart,—a truly devoted love, which severs only to unite the better,—the truest of loves, compared to which all other love is deceptive,—an eternal love into which all pure affections here below are transformed and by which they are immortalized.

Chapter 7

The Society of Marie-Réparatrice, into which Marie-Anne had been admitted, was founded in about the middle of the nineteenth century. On the 8th of December, 1854, the Baroness d'Hoogworst, who had been a widow for some years and was obliged to remain in the world for the education of her four children, was filled with the joy pervading God's Church and prayed longer than usual before the Blessed Sacrament. The reader will be pleased to hear from her own lips a description of the heavenly vision accorded her on that blessed day and permit us to supplement her description by extracts from various writings which have since appeared relating to the Society of Marie-Réparatrice.[1]

> The thought (she says) that a new glory was to surround my dearly beloved Mother gave me such an indescribable sense of sweetness, and the state of repose in which my good Mother placed my whole being was such that I might well think that she meant to reveal to me, not her glory only, but also some mystery of her heart.
>
> I forgot completely where I was, and whether I was kneeling or sitting; only on returning to my usual state did I perceive that I was kneeling. It was then just midday.
>
> During this visitation my thought was that

[1] Extracts from *La Société de Marie-Réparatrice,* by Père Delaporte, S. J.

Mary had given me a little place in Heaven, to enable me to enjoy the sight of her glory.

I saw the divine Mother (when I say "I saw" I report simply the interior images which made an impression on the eyes of my soul, which remain very present) crowned at the same time by the Blessed Trinity as Queen, as Virgin and as Mother.

She then told me the desire of her heart and promised to be grateful if I gave it realization. She reminded me that Jesus, in rising into Heaven, had not quitted the earth; but it was not so with herself. Her mother's heart suffered from being no longer on earth, to pay Him and have others pay Him their tribute of adoration, respect, tenderness and love. What afflicted her deeply were the outrages, the sacrileges, the profanations of all sorts that were heaped upon Jesus, without her being able to console Him, or lavish upon Him her love and her care so as to heal the wounds thus inflicted on Him.

Then, stirred by that maternal love that forgets all and obliterates all distance and difference (and what mother's love can equal Mary's?), she disclosed *a desire to have her place taken on earth by souls who would have a quite special tenderness and respect for her divine Son.* And she assured me that it would make her happy to see Him surrounded by faithful spouses, who have for Jesus that delicacy and tenderness of love that exists in the hearts of mothers.

Then this good Mother, with a look of supplication (if I might so describe it) which I shall never forget, told me that my mother's

heart would understand her, and that she expected to find love enough in me to enable me to bestow some upon her well-beloved Son, who had given me so many proofs of his tenderness.

I promised all to Mary; for my heart, my body, my whole being was penetrated with a sense of gratitude, of love, of sorrow, which crushed and confounded at the same time that it consoled me.

At the very moment when an infallible voice was proclaiming the Immaculate Conception, Mary was giving to the Church a new religious congregation. This, if I may presume to say as much, was her response, the thanks rendered by her maternal heart.

[1] To make reparation through Mary and with Mary, at the feet of Jesus—this is the whole plan, the whole aim, of the Society, and its whole reason for existence. It is true that to every loving soul the idea of *reparation* is brought home; and that *union with Mary* in honoring Jesus had its beginning in the Cenacle and on Calvary; but what is new and distinctive in the Society is the idea of uniting forever these two sentiments and making them the constant motive power and directing force of one's whole life. It is this characteristic that gives *Marie-Réparatrice* a distinct and unique position among religious institutes.

[2] What is required in a Réparatrice?

[1] *Valentine Riant:* Notes et Souvenirs. Par le R. P. Longhaye. Avant-propos.

[2] First of the Foundress's writings on her work.

A heart in which our Lord has the first place and which is wholly His.

Great generosity of love, which refuses neither suffering nor sacrifice.

A profound humility of heart in the sight of God and as shown to those who represent Him.

An abandonment of one's entire self to the good pleasure of God and a continual renouncing of all the demands of nature.

Obedience, unto the death of *self,* a death which will give the soul freedom to live.

The patience and humility of Jesus should be found in every child of Marie-Réparatrice.

The Passion of Jesus should be the ordinary subject of meditation during the hours spent before the Blessed Sacrament, till one is thoroughly penetrated with it.

The meekness and charity of Jesus should be on the lips and in the hearts of all.

All should know that a Réparatrice is a victim, and that a victim never spares himself.

[1] The life of a Réparatrice is twofold in character: by turns, it is occupied (1) with God in prayer and praise and (2) with the neighbor in self-devoting apostolic work.

Reparation to God, as offended and despised, especially in the mystery of the Eucharist, is realized, in the first place, by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Each day the Blessed Sacrament is exposed at about seven in the morning, at the conventual Mass. It remains exposed till the time of Benediction, which takes place toward the close of day. After Mass the adorers succeed one an-

[1] R. P. Delaporte, S.J.

other in pairs, every half-hour. Thus in the midst of cities, in which sin abounds, where words of blasphemy ring through the air, where contempt of God and his law exhibits itself in all manner of scandals and crimes, where sacrileges perhaps are committed, the Divine Master, the King eternal, receives due homage on the throne of his love. There are those who keep Him company, who adore Him, who humble themselves at his feet, who ask pardon for all the unfortunates who know not what they do, and for the guilty, who know too well.

As a reparation for the offences of which our Lord is the object during the night, two religious are appointed to adore before the tabernacle, from midnight to one o'clock.

Every Thursday, in memory of the institution of the Eucharist and of the Passion, the Blessed Sacrament remains exposed all night, as also on the three nights preceding Ash Wednesday.

The Divine Eucharist is the center, the hearth, of the Christian life, especially of a life of reparation. The religious of Marie-Réparatrice should live near the Blessed Sacrament; their souls should live *on* the Blessed Sacrament; hence frequent communion is in accordance with the spirit, the rules and the usages of the Society.

Besides the morning hour of prayer, the Mass, the adorations, the examens, the Benediction, a half-hour's spiritual reading, the rosary, the litanies of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, the choir religious, with the intention of making reparation to the adorable Heart of our Lord, assemble three times a day

to recite the Office of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On Saturdays and on feasts of the Blessed Virgin they substitute for this office that of the Immaculate Conception.

The principal devotions are the great devotions of the Catholic Church: the Eucharist, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Passion and the Immaculate Conception.—The principal feasts are, first, those which rank first in the universal Church, together with feasts connected with devotions mentioned above, and the Feast of Saint Joseph; next in order, those which recall memorable dates or names dear to the Society, and also the feasts of the Saints and the Blessed of the Society of Jesus.

The sacraments received by Réparatrices—Penance, the Eucharist and Extreme Unction—should be received in a spirit of reparation. The religious should be Réparatrices till their last sigh.

This desire, this need, this passion, in the matter of reparation should penetrate the soul, the acts, the entire existence of a Réparatrice, in accordance with the instructions of the Mother Foundress.

[1] No opportunity of making reparation should be neglected. Begin the day with an act of love to our Lord for those whose first thought is never for Him.

If we find it hard to rise in the morning, let us offer this act in reparation for the sensuality of those who slothfully spend whole mornings in bed.

If we suffer from the cold or from excessive heat, we should endure it in reparation for all

[1] Instruction of the Mother Foundress on the interior spirit.

the luxurious means employed by people in the world to avoid such discomfort.

Mass should be heard with the greatest possible recollection in reparation for the lack of respect shown by thousands of persons who come to Mass only to be seen.

Communion should be received with all the love, faith and purity possible in reparation for sacrilegious communions. Confessions should be made in the same spirit.

The Blessed Sacrament should be adored to compensate for the insults offered it and for disbelief in the Real Presence.—And so for the rest. Reparation each moment of the day and the night, by each pulsation of the heart, by every breath, by each aspiration of the soul, by every movement of the lips. Affectionate compensation made to the Heart of Jesus for all the shameful deeds of men.—What a vocation! What glory! What great love and what great merit!

Holiness, in all its forms, is of all times and all countries; but it is admirable to see how God always raises up in His Church the saints of whom it has need. If we review in thought the history of the Christian world, we shall notice that the first three centuries were those of the holy martyrs. The seed of the Gospel must be watered with blood. In the period of organization that followed, Providence sent the great doctors and pontiffs. During the long and mysterious succession of barbaric invasions appeared the saints who converted the nations; and when out of the prevailing chaos arose a marvelous *Christendom,*—when the golden age of the world, the middle age, came into being,—then the rich sap of Chris-

tianity produced another harvest of saints. Every nation, every state of life, contributed its share, and the earth was full of saints. But, alas! this state of things was not to endure. There came a gradual deterioration of morals and laxity invaded even the ranks of the clergy and of the religious. Then it was, when a false reformation was at work amongst men, that the saints arose who were the real reformers of the age. In spite of all, however, the world grew old in sin. Even then the divine mercy deigned to make a last sublime effort: the Sacred Heart was revealed to men! As the Heart of Jesus, with its every pulsation, lives but to repair the outraged glory of the Father, the more that Heart is studied and the more its warmth is imparted to men, the more does reparation appear as an element in modern sanctity. It is a marked characteristic of nearly all the more recent saints. There are few indeed in whose lives it has not been the dominant idea. With this fact well in view can the future be considered hopeless? May we not believe it has great things in store for us when we behold this grand phalanx of voluntary victims making an offering of itself to the eternal Justice, in union with the divine Repairer of sin?

Marie-Anne was now to have a place among these victims, the least and the most silent, but on that account one of the truest of Réparatrices. In her family she had remained only long enough to prepare herself for the sacrifice; in the world she had never been seen; in the convent, where her coming had awakened such brilliant expectations, she soon effaced herself and was lost to view; and in the end, after months of illness, she passed away without having realized any of her desires regarding the external apostolate. And yet her life bore the seal

of God's own work, the sign which carries with it no deception, though our proud natures accept it with such difficulty, and so few, even among the best, are capable of understanding it. We look askance at an apparently useless life; but on that great day, when the shadows of earth will have disappeared, what marvels will present themselves to our dazzled gaze when the eternal truth will have revealed to us the true value of things here below! We shall not then be blinded by that golden mist which the Holy Ghost so justly calls the *fascinatio nugacitatis*—the fascination of trifles. And we shall see the glory of the great ones of the earth pale before the glory and the brilliancy of the last and least of these humble lives spent in self-immolation.

The few short years which Marie-Anne was to pass at Marie-Réparatrice were begun with a sacrifice—that of seeing none of her relations accompany her to the novitiate at Toulouse. This first circumstance connected with her religious life should not pass unnoticed. She came alone and a stranger, and had had no personal relations with any of her future superiors; and we must add that she had stripped herself of everything, for she wished to practice detachment so far as not to take with her anything that was not strictly necessary. She had left at home all that belonged to her, begging her mother to dispose of everything as she thought proper. She left behind even things that were indispensable, so that they had to be sent to her later.—She did not now seem dismayed by a long journey in the company of strange sisters, nor by the sure prospect of arriving during the night, nor by the thought of her reception by the mistress of novices, to whom she must present herself unintroduced, nor by the thought that henceforth she would see little

or nothing of friends or relations. She went forward in spirit, urged by the irresistible force of divine love, seeking Jesus always and surmounting all obstacles in order to accomplish his will. He whom her heart desired was awaiting her; and it was He who recompensed her for her humble entrance into religion by an exceptionally fervent and successful novitiate.

We shall now listen to her own account of her experiences as written to her mother and her sisters.

First letter, in the train, September 23, 1895.

Dearest Mamma, the Peace of Jesus! I hope our Lord will fill your heart with this divine peace and that you are happy at seeing the sacrifice accomplished. I am indeed happy, now that I belong to God alone, whom I love. But I am thinking of you continually and mention you, one by one, to the Divine Master every time I pray. How I suffered at leaving you yesterday, Mamma dear. But Mother X at once brought me to the chapel, and there I said to myself: "It is all over now; no more weeping; it would sadden our Lord." I have not wept since, and I have felt that I am loved the more by the Divine Master, who will have me wholly his. This morning we left at half past eleven, after receiving the Father's last blessing and bidding adieu to Mother Superior and Mother Assistant. We have now just left Tours. Guess whom I met there: Charlotte Sicot! I did not recognize her under her superb Assumption habit. She is always so bright and happy. I am traveling with Mother X and Mother X, both of them charming. There are eight persons in our compartment, and there is no hope

of the number diminishing. Under the circumstances, it is only love that can make me write. But I shall write to you always, even if we are a thousand times more crowded. . . . I hope that my darling Catherine is acting bravely and that her grief has subsided.

My poor Teresa, how I have been thinking of her to-day! *A Dieu,* dear Mamma. *A Dieu,* my dear little sisters. I thank you for having given me to the good God. I love you and embrace you. Yours always in Jesus and in Mary Immaculate,

MARIE-ANNE.

If you can put into the first parcel you send a good strong pocket-knife, it will be very useful to me. All have them here and are astonished that I am without one. They must think me poor. Glory to Jesus in his poverty!

September 25, at 10 p.m.

My Dearest Little Mamma:

First of all, your pardon for the scrawl I sent you this morning. I tried hard to write well, but . . . We have just been at dinner. At Poitiers I bade good-bye to Charlotte, who is just delightful under her guimpe and, what is far better still, looks so holy. She sends a thousand messages to you. Thus far the saints have protected us. Our traveling has been very agreeable. We have written a joint letter to the Mother Superior of Le Mans. I said my prayers in union with you at half past eight. My heart is always near you. If you only knew how happy one feels at belonging only to Jesus! Would that my dear little sisters had the same

happiness. Every privation is delicious when suffered for Him. We feel Him so near to us during this fatiguing day of travel. . . . My wish for you all is that you may love our Lord as He is loved in the Society. It is delicious to see how He reigns in all these hearts consecrated to Him. Do pray for me that I may one day be a true Réparatrice. . . . How are all my dear little sisters? Tell them how much I love them.

A Dieu, dearest Mamma. Our Lord first and last, in whom I am

Your Loving MARIE-ANNE

We are now arriving in Toulouse, safe and sound. *Laus Deo!*

Pray for us. *A Dieu!*

Toulouse, September 26, 1895.

. . . Reverend Mother Superior has just told me I could have written to you yesterday. Forgive me for keeping you waiting a day for news which I imagine you must have been awaiting with impatience,—all through my timidity, which prevents me from seeking information as to what I can do. I have so many things to say to you. First of all, I was placed in the novitiate as early as a quarter of an hour after my arrival, without having made the one-day retreat. See what a spoiled child I am. My new sisters are all delightful, and I shrink from comparing myself with them. But I find I have been speaking to you about every one and not saying a word about our Sovereign Master Jesus, with whom it makes one so happy to live. I see Him continually, and am often close to Him. Oh!

if I could only procure you the same happiness! He is here served so well by every one that it is delicious to think of it. Pray that I may not be too unworthy a Réparatrice. The Mothers are so good that I fear I shall never get near them in holiness.

Oh! if my sisters only saw me in my postulant's cap! I laugh to myself when I think of how they would roar. I wipe the dishes with fervor; but I go about it gently, as I know what kind of hands I have.

I haven't my name yet. Be patient. I am writing in haste, in order that my letter may be on its way this evening. I am recommending you all to our Lord without ceasing. Every evening at Benediction I beg the Divine Master to make his blessing reach as far as you. . . .

Toulouse, September 29.

. . . It is now eight days since the great separation, since the happy yet heart-rending day when our Lord took me away from you. Eight days which I hope will count for something when we have got to Heaven; for they have been hard days. I know from your letters that you must have suffered. They are so pious as to delight me, so sad as to afflict me. Oh! may Jesus give you his peace, his divine consolations in this sacrifice. I should like to have you all here with me. My sisters would match so well with the charming novices around me. As for myself, I have neither their fervor nor their charity, and I feel a gulf between them and me. Do pray for me. I pray for you without ceasing. Everywhere and in everything I offer you to our Lord.

A happy and holy feast to my dear little Michel.—I lead an active and busy life. Not a minute is left one to waste. The time slips by so easily. I wash the dishes with all possible ardor, and I apply myself to sewing and stitching with a zeal that would just delight Catherine. They are teaching me the principles, for I know less than nothing about this art, as about so many other things. And then the exercise of manual labor! It comes at every turn in the novitiate. The good God is taking me on my weak side. When I find myself pursued everywhere by those pests of baskets I feel like flying. I have to make my eyes as supernatural as possible to look at them. I eat, drink and sleep to perfection, and was never so well in my life. I am placed on the list of late risers and early retirers. I should be ashamed of myself if I were not guided by obedience and if it were not in order that I may have the more strength to expend later on in the service of our Lord.

I have as "angel" a Spaniard, whose devotedness is admirable. She has a hard time of it with me. She gives me no little diversion when explaining the office to me, as I am incapable of understanding her Latin: *per Dominoom nostroom Jesoom Christoom,* and so on.

Tell my dear little Françoise that I do not rise at midnight (oh, if I only could!), and that my wish for her is that she may sleep as soundly at that hour as I do. Tell Gabrielle and Catherine that I see them again in all my sisters in the novitiate.

. . . Oh, yes, give me all the news. Remember me to all our good neighbors in Marans.

Toulouse, October 20, 1895.

. . . On Sundays I absorb into myself what you tell me, in order to follow you well throughout the week. Thanks, Mamma dear, for your very kind letters, which I am so fond of receiving. You know and you will see whether in heart I am not still your own Marie-Anne, your Number Four, the senior of the second group and the Benjamin of the first,—two rôles which I love so much. Everything in your letters is exceedingly interesting to me.

. . . The house is even quieter than usual, and that raises me to the third heaven. We have now only one recreation in the day, and except for that we remain silent, seeking, however, to hear our Lord speak. We feel that He is close to us. If you only knew how I *feel* that it is He who is directing me through my superiors. Sometimes I get an immediate and decisive answer to doubts which I have not even expressed and to questions which I have not been able to put into words. Or, again, a permission is granted, or leave given to take a rest, at the very moment when I felt the need of it. How can I fail to see our Lord in this? Perhaps I shall not always see Him so clearly; but is not this grace at the beginning of my religious life something to be valued?

. . . Need I tell you even now, Mamma dear, that I am infinitely happy? The wound caused by separation is not closed yet; oh! no, it needs only to be touched to bleed afresh. Can it ever be healed? I prefer to keep it intact at the bottom of my heart and to suffer always for having torn myself away from you,—seeing that in spite of this wound, nay by reason of it, God

permits me, permits us all, to be united to Himself. To be his alone—what a happiness, what a grace! I have a deeper feeling of it every day. Why can I not gather you all under this roof?

There has been no change in my life since Sunday, at least exteriorly. I am still "Assistant Refectorian." What a pompous title! My sisters at home are going to have the laugh on me: *I believe* I have broken a glass. If it were only a matter of breaking glasses, there would be no difficulty in that; but to go and acknowledge the fault is quite another thing; and I pray our Lord to make me break many glasses, in order to practice me in humility.

. . . I must tell you that I enjoy the high position of "last postulant," and it is to this I owe the honor of removing the veil and mantle of Mother Superior when she leaves the choir. Does it seem to you a trifle? Ah! you don't know the weight of care it lays upon me! I drop into the ante-choir like a bombshell and pounce upon my own veil first, in order to have time to fold it. I disturb the recollection of half-a-dozen novices by the fussy way in which I open the closet in order to put away this blessed veil. I then fly to the choir-door and await with anxiety a chance to do something stupid,—and I never fail to do it. I forget to close the door, or in closing it I catch Mother Assistant's mantle. I keep Mother Superior waiting, or I display so much zeal that sometimes, as, for instance, yesterday evening, Mother looks a bit alarmed as she clings to her blue veil whilst I am removing her choir-veil. But she always has the kindness to say a word of thanks, and I feel consoled. But that is not the end of it. The

veil must be folded, and that is my cross. The mantle is no less annoying; I miss the folds; I call upon my good angel in every note in the scale to assist me. As a general thing, the gas is put out in the worst part of my trouble. Meanwhile, all the rest are on their way to the oratory, and I find I am the last. I arrive out of breath and with flushed face, and make an apology for a genuflection, in order to be in my place at the first words of the prayers.—Such are my tribulations. None the less, let me tell you in confidence that this office is my joy, that I love to perform its duties, and that I should be greatly out of sorts if any other postulant should rob me of it.

I am beginning to learn how to set the table, and, mind you, for fifty-two persons. I know how to sort out the forks and at whose places I should put the nicest ones (*les plus cholies,*[1] as a certain lay postulant calls them). What makes me tremble is the thought of being appointed reader and of mounting that reading-desk, the bare sight of which alarms me. I have such a peculiar feeling about things when I read that my tones seem to me to be those of a person telling a story in which there are ogres and big wolves, frightening little children. I am sure to raise a laugh, and as you know my humility, it is this that makes me fear.—I don't know why I have been telling you about all these trifles. But, really, since we began to have but one recreation I have felt desperately inclined to laugh.—Will you have the goodness, Mamma dear, to tell our good Monsieur le curé, whilst conveying to him my kindest regards, that in

[1] A provincial pronunciation of *les plus jolies*—the nicest ones.

praying for his parish I pray above all for the *Pasteur* (*style bonne soeur*,[1] my little sisters), and that I strongly recommend to him his little *sheep*, that she may go to the end of perfection, or at least to the end of her forces. I am always hoping to see Monsieur le curé at my reception.

You must not be troubled about any delay of mine in writing. To me there will be nothing surprising in it. I must tell you also not to mind if you do not receive anything for a week. I might easily be prevented from writing to you on a Sunday. I am learning by experience that Réparatrices are busy people. Oh, pray for me that I may make some progress in virtue! I do not feel myself advancing and have some fear. Help me with your prayers. I have graces heaped upon me and am afraid of losing them. I cannot describe to you how our Lord spoils me in everything. The smallest details of my life are marked with the seal of his love, and instead of being a saint I remain my old self!

Toulouse, November 3, 1895.

. . . My week has been quite full of Jesus, but of the cross of Jesus. He has taken away from me my good and holy Mother Superior, to place her at the head of the new foundation at Bordeaux. What a trial for the little postulant, for the novitiate, for the entire house. I confess, it has caused me profound suffering. Jesus had left her long enough to me to make me over-attached to her. When He saw that

[1] *Pasteur*, originally *shepherd*, later *pastor*, is given here a piously humorous turn after the manner of a *bonne soeur* (good sister), which phrase also contains some playful allusion. (See p. 157.) *Curé* is "pastor" in ordinary Catholic usage.

my attachment was excessive He took her away from me. I bless Him for it, though my heart is sorely wounded, and I thank Him for having stamped with the sign of the cross my entry into the religious life. I hope I shall not forget, it is the only kind of coin that has any circulation amongst us. For the rest, I am beginning to have a vivid perception of his infinitely merciful designs in my behalf in this trial. Do you remember the Mother Assistant? It is she that God has placed at the head of the house. I believe one would have to be very perverse not to make some progress under her in the way of perfection. I must tell you, to my shame, that in this matter I have had fears at which I shudder. I have a fear of going too fast and of being obliged to aim too high. An edifying confession, indeed! Thanks be to God, the idea has not taken much of a hold upon my thoughts; and when I discovered how firm, though at the same time how gentle, would be the direction of Reverend Mother Superior, I turned to Jesus and said to Him, "Decidedly, Your ways are justified again." The matter is now ended and there is no more hesitation. With a cross at the base of my religious life, I press forward with eagerness and confidence. I hope my Mother Mistress will not spare anything in Marie-Anne, in this poor Marie-Anne who fears everything and is so slack and faint-hearted. She is incapable of immolating herself, but she is willing to be immolated, and God will see that it is accomplished. . . . Ah! that house at Bordeaux has cost us much! It is bedewed with our tears. I seem to have lived whole months during these days, so profound are the

lessons I have been taught by this painful experience. But God is good—let us praise Him without ceasing. . . . Notwithstanding the cross of Jesus, and by reason of it, I am happy. You must all pray for me, and for all the novitiate.

November 17, 1895.

. . . Saint Stanislas has sent me my name. It was on his feastday that the answer came. Very Reverend Mother General has kindly given me the name of *Marie de l'Agnus Dei*,[1] which was more than I dared hope for. I am quite delighted,—the more so as I had Saint Timothea hanging over my head, a young mother of that name having recently died; and notwithstanding all the respect I owe this good saint, I prefer to her a thousand times the Lamb of God. The sole proviso made by Mother General was that you approved. But as I was sure of your approbation, I felt I could speak in your name. Oh, my dear Mamma, how shall this Marie-Anne be transformed into the Agnus Dei? On the 1st of December and in this last month of my postulancy I begin a sort of Lenten season, during which I shall famish Marie-Anne out of existence. You will pray that there may issue forth from the process a little lamb, all white, very meek, entirely immolated to God's good pleasure. The task for me is great. . . .

. . . My dear Mamma, will you believe that the manual work is becoming a positive pleasure? Please tell Catherine that I know how to fine-draw,[2] that I am fond of it, and that I now

[1] Mary of the Lamb of God.

[2] *Remmailler*, to mend a fabric by deftly filling in with thread or yarn.

turn out very neat mending of that kind by the yard. But there is another transformation: celery is my delight. If this keeps on you will not know me. All this proves that everything is good in the house of the good God.—I say nothing about my health, because it is flourishing. I don't notice any fatigue after the night adorations. The other night, between three and four o'clock, when my companion had gone to awake the two religious who were to follow us in the adoration, I was all alone in the dead of the night, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar. Never was child happier! Yes, I am too happy.—I am writing to you in a hurry, but my love for you is calm and deep.

To one of her sisters:

Toulouse, October 6, 1895.

I assure you, my dear, that you have a part in my daily life, that you are near me the whole day long, and that our two names, which were always joined in the past, are not separated now. Often, when I am in adoration, I say to our Lord: "Jesus, imagine this is Catherine, and give her the same graces as if she were here." Every morning in the oratory I make for you the act of consecration you have requested, and I place both you and myself at the feet and in the Heart of Jesus.—Oh! if you only knew what it is to be here in attendance on Him and how fond I am of these hours of adoration. When one can say to Him, "Here I am, my Lord; now make of me *all* that You desire," there is brought into action, between the Divine Victim and the soul an irresistible current, if I may so express it, which draws the one to the other

The soul, it is true, is not exempt from suffering, but it accepts it with a profound joy, because it feels itself to be under the hand of God. I have had a glimpse of this life of union, and I return thanks to our Lord for having given me, with my vocation, the inestimable favor of these hours of heart-to-heart communion with Himself. Our life as Réparatrices, as you understood before I left home, is a life of renunciation. We must go directly counter to all that nature loves and seeks. By reason of our vocation itself, our Lord does not require of us to injure our heads or undermine our strength; but of renunciation, never enough; of humility, never enough; of love, never enough. I confess that such profoundly interior virtue made me fear at first. I should almost have preferred to be told to spend five minutes in opening a door or to have the patience to use two or three dozen pins in dressing. I feared I should never be able to conquer myself to the extent of realizing the *ac cadaver,*[1] forgetting that I exist and no longer regarding myself as other than an instrument ready to the hands of superiors, and thus fitted to promote the glory of God. And I have the same fear still. But I am far from thinking that all depends on me. It is for our Lord to act, and for me to submit to his action. I have given over my habit of saying all day long that I shall never be a saint and, facing about and heading for perfection, I have asked the divine Pilot to steer my poor shattered bark to its destination, after He has made it thoroughly seaworthy.

This is one of those interior letters which

[1] *Perinde ac cadaver*—just as a corpse.—*St. Ignatius.*

you have been asking me to write to you. I wish I had the fervor needed to speak to you about our dear Jesus. But He will speak to you Himself. To-morrow you will have the adoration, and I envy you. I used to love this feast so much!

November 10, 1895.

My dearest sister, I have just had for the first time the midnight adoration in the chapel. Impossible to describe the joys of that hour or the happiness of being so near to Jesus at the moment when He is offended most, when He is forgotten most. You were all there with me in his presence. After this, to spend the whole night in sleep will be more intolerable than ever. But my room is near the chapel, and I am quite close to Him; so that I am a little consoled for sleeping while He is watching. . . . Tell, and tell a second time, dear Mamma, that her mind can be perfectly at rest in regard to me. I am happy, cheerful, in good health, and rejoicing daily more and more to be in the house of the good God. In the midst of my lamps and candles I am tasting of a rare happiness. My sisters in religion are very amiable, my Mother Under-Mistress perfect (that you are aware of); and when I am too much afraid to go to see Mother Provincial, or even Mother Superior, I say once or oftener the *Veni Sancte,* and then go, trusting in God. There is a certain corridor which is filled with my *Veni Sancte's,* and that is the one in which the superiors live.

The days wore on and the ordinary period of postulancy was nearing its end. Marie de l'Agnus Dei, as we

shall now call her, entered upon her retreat in preparation for her reception. She had apprised her family that she would not write again till the day, as yet unknown to her, which should be fixed for that ceremony; but she had reckoned without the kindness of her superiors, and on the 3rd of December she wrote as follows:—

> See how our Lord is already making me break silence; and it is to announce so joyful a piece of news! It is certain that I shall take the habit on Christmas night; and thus at the hour at which Jesus came into the world Marie de l'Agnus Dei will be born to the service of the Divine Infant. You can imagine my joy, dearest Mamma, and are already sharing it. I am always being spoiled by the good God. And when I look back at my life as a whole, I find it covered, deluged with graces. But, alas! what have I done in return for so many incalculable benefits? Jesus knows it all . . . and yet He loves me still, and you see what He is giving me. . . . What return shall I make? How I should like to give Him myself, wholly and entirely! . . . Come and aid me, come and offer me once more to God. What a joy it will be to have you near me, to feel that you are making the entire sacrifice of your Marie-Anne, and that you, here below, and my father above are at the same time giving me to our Lord. This morning we had a function in connection with the taking of the last vows. The preacher made us feel how sublime was this consummation of one's alliance with Jesus Christ. . . . And it is for this that our Lord is preparing me. The thought would be overwhelming if we felt that

all depended on ourselves. But it is He that does all, and we have only to put ourselves at the disposal of his merciful love. My first step forward will be made on Christmas night. God be blessed and praised!

I have been letting this *Magnificat* well up from my heart because I know that it expresses your feeling as well as mine. Reverend Mother Provincial published the news this afternoon at the general recreation. I had not regarded the matter as absolutely certain; so that I was the first to be surprised and delighted. All, with true religious charity, congratulated "the little lamb;" for this title has clung to me since Mother Provincial on one occasion applied it to me.—It seems a bit strange as used to designate *me;* but when I give expression to this thought I am told that God can do all things—even make me meek and mild; and with that I hold my peace and hope on.

Before taking the habit of Marie-Réparatrice, her delicate sense of gratitude prompted her to write and thank Very Reverend Mother General for the favor of being admitted into the novitiate. The following very significant letter which she sent her was the last she wrote before taking the veil:—

My Dear Very Reverend Mother:

I am hastening to tell you all my happiness and to express to you my deep gratitude for being permitted to take the habit on the delicious night of the Nativity, which this year will have for me its fullest measure of joy. This grace from our Lord, added to so many others, has

filled me with gladness. I am simply confounded at the thought of the numberless benefits that have been heaped upon me.

I cannot put into words, my dear Mother, an expression of the happiness I feel at being one of your children and living in the abode of Marie-Réparatrice. Everything here is so good, so simple, so homelike, and there is such an atmosphere of peace begotten of obedience, that there is only one thing that disquiets me, and that is that I have nothing to suffer; only one thing that I fear, which is that I shall do too little for our Lord. I console myself by the thought that this calm will not last forever, and that our Lord will some day take me seriously and send me a little of his cross.

Dear Very Reverend Mother, I tell you all this in order to show you once more how infinitely good our Lord is and how He has lavished his graces upon me. Hence, I should be very degenerate, indeed, if with all this I did not become a saint. I hope I shall make some progress after my retreat, when I shall wear the dear habit of our Blessed Lady and shall have a place in the ranks of the Society.

How heartily I thank you, Very Reverend Mother, for having granted me the name of Marie de l'Agnus Dei. I love it from the bottom of my heart. Mamma finds it delicious and is exceedingly grateful to you for having given it to me.

If you have need of a victim, dear Mother, you are aware that the lamb is born to be sacrificed, and you will call for the little *agnus Dei* that was born beside the Crib. My name gives me the privilege of paying toll for all. Hence,

as my life can be of very little utility to any one, if you need it for the safety of the Society, or even for its welfare in any degree, I here place it in your hands. I am quite prepared to offer myself to suffer and to die in union with our Blessed Lord.

I thank you again, and a thousand times more warmly, my dear Mother, now that I have begun to realize what a favor you have granted in admitting me into the ranks of your children. I beg you to bestow upon Mary of the Lamb of God your maternal blessing and to accept, Very Reverend Mother, the expression of the profound respect with which I sign myself,

Your Obedient and Devoted
Daughter in our Lord,
MARIE-ANNE HERVÉ-BAZIN.

Chapter 8

The day had now arrived when Marie-Anne was to become, as she herself said, "a victim with the Lamb of God." In regard to this name, which was to be to her a symbol and which she was so justly entitled to bear, she had very special lights. Of this we shall have frequent evidence. Her own testimony is worded thus: "It was in the chapel in the crypt of our house at Le Mans, whilst I was looking at the door of the tabernacle, on which was carved an image of the Lamb immolated and victorious, that I had my first thought of it and my first comprehension of it."

Mme. Hervé-Bazin and some of her children were enabled to be present at the reception of the young religious. When she arrived in Toulouse, it was in the old house, so rich in memories, a house hidden away among the alleys, and with one of its doors opening, as though with reluctance, on the Place de l'Inquisition, that they brought to her the young postulant. There was her child, arrayed in black gown, cape, and net-cap with strings, after the manner of postulants everywhere; but if there was not much elegance in her exterior, the soul of the happy young spouse of Christ shone out as of yore from the depths of those brilliant eyes. The ceremony took place immediately before the three Masses, which were to be celebrated by Father de L——, of the Society of Jesus. For this reason, and in order not to make the services overlong, the usual sermon was omitted. Jesus alone

spoke to the heart of his child. It was noticed what an atmosphere of recollection pervaded the chapel during the ceremonies. Marie-Anne had been quite free to choose the morning of the 24th for her reception, but she did not hesitate a moment in choosing the evening, for she had rather, she said, hear the Divine Infant speak and preferred to be the lamb offered to Jesus at his very birth.

At the appointed moment, still clad in the somber weeds of the postulant, she was conducted by her superiors to the foot of the altar. Following a beautiful custom of the Society, the religious habit she was about to receive lay folded in a white basket in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The altar was covered with lilies and brilliant with lights. The choir of the professed religious was filled to the last stall, the long snow-white veils of the chanters of the divine office moving in wavelike curves at every change of posture; and one might well suppose he heard, above this sea of heavenly whiteness, the canticle sung by the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, so pure were the voices of the actual singers. Marie-Anne answered the questions proposed to her and then retired from the chapel. She was now clothed in her virginal robe, her blue scapular and her novice's white veil, after which she returned and knelt in the middle of the choir.—What did she say to Him whose livery she bore? What was now passing in her heart? These are the secrets of the King and of his faithful spouses. Let us not seek to know them. We may well envy the souls who are called to an anticipation of the great eternal act of union, and who in the midst of much bitterness have at times a foretaste of its ecstatic joys.

Notwithstanding her generous self-immolation, Marie

de l'Agnus Dei had a fleeting hour of joy and of triumph. She was in possession of what had been the dream of her life, she was enjoying the presence of those who were dear to her, she was appreciated and was happy in the religious community, her health was excellent: not the smallest cloud darkened her life's horizon. All these pleasant things she enjoyed to the full, and we shall never forget the expression of infinite bliss that transfigured her features when, on leaving the chapel, she flung herself into her mother's arms.

Two days later Mme. Hervé-Bazin was back in Angers and the noviceship of Marie de l'Agnus Dei had begun. What her novitiate was like we must learn from her companions, from her superiors, and also from her personal notes,—although from this time forward such documents are comparatively rare. We shall follow as best we may the life of our silent novice, whom we now see speeding through the interminable corridors of the house, her eyes cast down, her lips moving in prayer. Her movements are as rapid as ever. Her religious habit only emphasizes the smallness of her person, and the folds of her choir-mantle envelop a body so diminutive that it seems to have disappeared altogether. With the best of good will, none of her fellow novices ever arrived before her in the chapel for the early morning visit. Everywhere and always, she was the first at the foot of the altar. At a later period, one of her co-novices who saw her at Bordeaux, at a time when disease had reduced her to a most painful condition of body, could testify that her fidelity on this point had remained unchanged.

Another of her sisters in religion writes about her: "I was quite a young novice when Marie-Anne arrived.

From the very beginning I noticed in her whole bearing something above the ordinary. There was a maturity of character in her, and at the same time a combination of childlike candor with an exceptional fervor and regularity. The impression she made upon me was such that I called her in my own mind 'the little John Berchmans.' I still see her in her black dress, serious, recollected and bestowing the greatest care upon the smallest things . . . and later on so happy at receiving the habit at the midnight Mass, close to the Crib of the Infant Jesus."

"Never," says another, "did any one ever see her transgress a rule, even the rule of silence. She was faithful to the smallest customs and the least observances."

Another writes: "I never noticed any action of hers that was striking or remarkable, but I should have been much less edified by it than I was by her constant exactness in the smallest matters pertaining to obedience."

One day, on being asked what she thought of an engraving which hung upon a wall in the novitiate, she blushed and acknowledged with a smile that she had never seen it; for, although she had been charged with the sweeping of the apartment, she thought she must imitate Saint Aloysius, even in that occupation.

In all her sisters she saw only God. "Mother," said one of them, "this novice is an angel. She is all devotedness, she obeys at the least sign, performs with a will the most disagreeable and the most humble tasks, and, notwithstanding her intelligence, asks explanations as if she knew nothing."

Her mistress, wishing to test her spirit of detachment at a time when she was severely tried and when her only consolation was found in opening her heart to her, commanded a month's truce to all reflection on the mat-

ter and all coming for advice. During those thirty days our good novice seemed no longer to remember her trouble; but in order to renew her spiritual strength she would often take up and read a little note which she had placed conveniently in her table-drawer. It was worded thus: "On my sanctification perhaps depends the salvation of a great number . . . yes . . . or at least the fervor of the novitiate."

Her virtues, which already attracted so much attention, had nothing gloomy about them. Indeed she was the gayest and wittiest member of the community, and would occasionally set the whole recreation-room laughing. Her conversations were like her letters in this respect. If in previous years there had been anything over piquant in her criticisms, the only remnant of this tendency now was a certain innocent roguishness, to which, however, she never gave vent at the expense of charity. Her modesty forbade her to become a retailer of stories, but at odd moments a sudden flash of wit, a curious remark or a hearty outburst of merriment from the little novice would wreathe in smiles the severest of countenances,—if indeed there were any such at Marie-Réparatrice.

The admiration felt for her was so general that one of her superiors was prompted to write to Mme. Hervé-Bazin in the following strain:—

> Among the excellent vocations which Divine Providence has been directing towards Marie-Réparatrice, that of your own dear child is particularly appreciated.
>
> Whilst a blessing to your family, she will be to the Heart of our Lord, which is so much

offended in our day, a delicious oasis of purity and love. May your other children, my dear Madam, respond to your truly maternal and Christian solicitude.

We must now take up the thread of her correspondence, which is considerable in volume, though limited by the usages of the Society. She had many brothers and sisters to write to, and each and all of them have preserved as treasures the letters of the dear little religious. We are thus enabled to follow the course of her life, as her days came and went, each with its trials or its consolations, its gloom or its sunshine.

To her Mother:

Toulouse, January 5, 1896.

I frequently thought of you on the first of the year. We are so scattered! There are members of our family everywhere: in Heaven, before the Blessed Sacrament, on journeys abroad, at Angers . . . all of them in exile, except him who has at last reached his heavenly country. What a happiness it will be to rejoin him there! The longer I live the more I long to be with him and the more I envy his lot in having been the first to go hence. And he loves whilst rejoicing, as we here below can love whilst laboring, for the glory of God. A double happiness, a double consolation, for having accepted the continuance of life's burden. . . . But I wonder why I have been writing to you in this vein; for my health is perfect, we have real spring weather, and it does not at all seem as though the good God wanted me straightway in Heaven.

Toulouse, January 12, 1896.

My Dear Little Michel:

The peace of Jesus! What pleasure your two little letters have given me! I am so much pleased to get a letter from you that you must write often; and you will, I am sure. I entirely agree with you, my dear: if the good God were known He would be loved and would never be offended. We, then, who know Him a little, must strive to love Him with all our heart. . . . I must now bid you, my little Michel, to embrace your own dear Catherine for me, as I can do so no longer, and to tell your nurse and all the domestics that I do not forget them and that I pray for them.

Toulouse, January 12, 1896.

My dear Little Jacques:

The peace of Jesus! If last night you could have been in the room in which Marie de l'Agnus Dei was sleeping and if you could have known what your little sister of the Réparatrice was thinking of, you would have seen that she was dreaming of you. Yes, I saw you in a dream, and you were grown to be a young man. . . . And what I want particularly to tell you is that I saw you "fighting the good fight," following in the footsteps of father, brave, generous, a good Christian,—in a word, the true model of what Jacques Hervé-Bazin ought to be. And when I awoke I thanked God for having thought that you would one day be a young man of that type and that you would be really and truly what our dear father had been. And then I prayed that the good God might accomplish his good work in you, and that you might be the

joy and consolation of my good Mamma. Oh! my dear Jacques, what good might you not do if inspired by such examples. Oh! yes, I am going to implore the good God that you may be a Christian, and a true one. I shall not let you throw away either your time or your heart.—Thanks for your letter, my dear little brother. It has given me more pleasure than you will believe. I should like to show you my white dress, but that, I hope, will come a little later. Meanwhile, pray for your elder sister, who loves you so much *in Christo*.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

January 26, 1896.

. . . Can you imagine the admonition I got the other day from Mother Superior? "Do you know," she said to me, "that you could easily become a *bonne sœur?*"[1] I trembled . . . then I laughed quite heartily and cried out: "Oh, my dear Mother, if Catherine heard you, wouldn't she triumph!" I conjure you to implore all the saints that I may never be a *bonne sœur,*—that I may have no more small ideas,—"small as myself," to use the excellent comparison of Mother Superior. She, by the way, is very large of person, and her ideas are just as large, to say the least. Another admonition is that I don't know how to dress. In that respect I am just as bad as I was in the world. Mother Under-Mistress spends her time in arranging my guimpe, or my veil, and I never meet Mother Superior but she changes a pin in my dress. All this brings my thoughts back to the old days and

[1] Literally, "good sister," explained by the context.

reminds me of the time when I went about looking for you, with my pin-cushion in one hand and my ornamentals in the other. Thanks be to God, I am rid at any rate of the little knots, the little rosettes, the little velvet neckbands, the little studs,—which were never meant but to practice people in angelic patience, a thing I never possessed. Tell me what saint you pray to in order to be always correct. . . .

Toulouse, February 2, 1896.

. . . As to news of consequence, I must tell you that I have changed my room for the fourth time. I am with Mother X, in the room once occupied, it seems, by Father de Ravignan. I hope to find some scraps of his virtues in the corners. Unfortunately, the novices are so diligent that the dust has not time to grow old on the walls, and there cannot be left a single particle of the dust of Father de Ravignan's days. I am happy, all the same, to be occupying so hallowed a chamber.

. . . P. S. Do thank God with me for my vocation. I am so happy!

To her Mother before Lent:

Toulouse, February 7, 1896.

. . . Well, Mamma dear, we are going to be deprived of the pleasure of writing to one another; but is it possible for a real Réparatrice to complain when she sees the unspeakable suffering, the torture, indeed, endured by Jesus during these days of carnival? . . . And we are all réparatrices, or wish to be, I am sure. . . . You can always take for granted, my dear Mamma, that I am ever more and more happy

and in peace. Every day finds me more grateful to you for having given me to the good God. There are great consolations in the religious life, and the greatest is the peace and joy felt at being wholly our Lord's and living so near to Him.

Toulouse, April 5, 1896.

Alleluia! Isn't that the word? How delightful it sounds after the long silence of Holy Week! And how it springs from the heart when one has suffered so much in sympathy with our Divine Lord. I have received and read your letters with heartfelt joy. But oh! how jealous I am! Think of it! I had only to leave home for you to obtain the Blessed Sacrament, and I, who prayed so hard to see It in our dear little chapel, shall never set eyes upon It there! But you must take my place before It, and as you kneel at our Lord's feet say to Him what I would say to Him if present. This event has made me so incomparably happy that I can give no expression to what I feel. Latterly, I had been inspired to pray much for the obtaining of this favor, and I believe it was on Saint Joseph's Day that I prayed with exceptional fervor.

I have not told you that I am not only chanter of the first class but also organist of the fourth. On the Fridays in Lent the mistress in charge allowed me to fill the chapel with lenten strains.

April 19, 1896.

. . . Let us suffer ourselves to be carried in the arms of God's sweet providence. God knows when and how to come to our aid. I often re-

proach myself for forgetting how much God loves us and how much He wishes our happiness. If we were well persuaded of this we should not so often pout at manifestations of His holy will. When I examine myself, how rudely I find I behave towards our Lord! How much sighing, how little thanksgiving, what scant generosity! and all this whilst giving others the impression that I show a *rare* generosity when occasion requires it. That is how I behave! And our Lord is so good as not to take umbrage at it! Oh, Mamma dear, how good He is!

April 26, 1896.

There is so much interruption and starting afresh when I am writing a letter of any length. At one time it is the office, at another an adoration or some other duty assigned me. Everything must be laid aside, and there is no knowing if there will be time to finish later. Our venerated Mother Foundress has made it a point to divide up our time into small portions, knowing that submission to this régime was the best reparation possible. She knew well what abnegation meant—that is plain. The good angels must smile when they interrupt us continually, in our Lord's name; but we must get even with them by laughing louder than they when the sound of the bell cuts in two one of the finest sentences in the world. . . . My good angel is reminding me at this very moment that I have the adoration at eleven and must rise and go. I was too proud of having finished a couple of pages without stopping.

Just between you and me, Catherine dear (for this might give scandal), I am frightened at the

little progress I am making, at my slackness and at the obstacles I am putting in the way of grace. I am not going forward; I hope to God I am not going backward. It is always the same pride, the same rigidity, the same want of abnegation. I have fewer occasions for showing my bad dispositions—that is the best I can say. I fear I am giving you pain, but I am telling you this to get your prayers. I have great need of them. You must take me to task, without any fear, for any faults noticed in my letters. I must humble myself, and every means will be good for crushing my vanity. Pray especially that I may understand certain things which look to me as though they could not be united. Pray that I may have the energy which should be the heritage of a Réparatrice. I have no desire for a piety living amidst clouds and exclamation points. I want to serve our Lord amidst struggles and trials, be they the death of me.

A Dieu. Beg of our Lord to make me a saint . . . I mean a real one, a saint who will suffer and toil.

May 2, 1896.

. . . I am fond of those long letters, simple and familiar, which picture life at Le Patys. Tell Catherine I do, indeed, remember the apple-tree, all rose-tinted and overhanging the water, and the partridges and the ferns and the delicious leaf-covered walks. For the sake of no one in this world could I have quitted all this; but Jesus has in Himself that which transcends all joy and all beauty. I possess all in his Heart. Who can be compared with Him?

Toulouse, May 2, 1896.

. . . Catherine amuses me when she blames me for twice singing all alone without telling you. If I told you every time I sing a solo I should never end. Mother X calls me her drum-major. When there is no express sign to the contrary, I always start out alone, whether I know the piece or not. Three out of four times I hear my neighbors whispering: "Is it a solo? . . . solo? . . . solo?" I motion to them emphatically that it is not, as I keep on singing, and when the others have begun to join in, the solo is over. Happily, I don't mount the tribune every day—that would be a little too much. As you may imagine, there are many humiliations connected with these improvised solos. Yesterday, the Mother, not having a more appropriate expression at hand, told me as though she believed it that I had sung like a *sheep;* and indeed I must admit that I had *bleated* the Litany of the Blessed Virgin in horrible fashion. God forgive me for the distractions I occasion the community.

Toulouse, June 7, 1896.

My month of June is a busy one, but filled with consolations. I am the sacristan of the oratory and am making my first experiment in catechizing. Both occupations are delightful. I have three children who come every morning: Louise, Reine and Françoise,—the last a charming child who reminds me of her namesake at home. They are preparing for first communion. Louise is *fifteen.* They greatly need the visit of the good God. I recommend them to your prayers. It is incredible how one's heart

warms to these little souls, so much loved by our Lord.

A Dieu, dear Mamma. Rest assured that I am the happiest child of the good God. I shall never thank you enough for letting me leave home whilst still young. I see at every instant how true it is that new batter is more easily molded than old. Considering how slack I am now, if I were older I should never get accustomed to the ways of the religious life. It requires a deal of courage to begin when one is stricken in years. But at nineteen it is delicious. Yes, everything is delicious here, in God's own sweet atmosphere.

At Le Patys also, I am sure, all is for the good God. Oh, what a blessing it is to love Him! Let us be saints!

Toulouse, July 19, 1896.

Our profession is to make reparation, and hence we must suffer always, in one way or other. I hope the good God will not leave me without this daily bread of ours. But just at present my complaint is that I have too little of it rather than too much.

. . . Oh, do not pray that I may be well in body, but that my soul may be fair in God's sight. What matters it whether I live or die, if only God's will be accomplished in me?

July 19, 1896.

In spite of all, my great oaks and my little shaded walks have a strong hold upon my heart, which beats a response at every mention of them. This does not imply that I would leave the good God in order to recover them. God

be praised, no! The tabernacle, need I tell you, has more ravishing mysteries to be explored and gives brighter glimpses of beauty than can be furnished by all nature. The four walls of the chapel seem to enclose Paradise itself; though it is no mere seeming; for is not the chapel God's own abode, and is not God all that we desire in Heaven?

Toulouse, August 16, 1896.

. . . I am so sorry to hear that you have not entirely recovered, my dear Mamma. You will have to be nursed with all possible care. If in my present rôle of infirmarian I had you as a patient, how happy I should be to bring you your tisanes. From the moment I began in the infirmary there was some one each day who was kind enough to remain in bed. Mother Assistant had even a bronchial attack ready for me. How devoted that was! But there was no keeping this good mother in bed. After a couple of days she was walking about as usual. How provoking! . . . I make the sister infirmarian laugh by my inexperience in the matter of drugs. She will have a time of it educating me in that line.

. . . I am telling you all these trifles, my dear Mamma, in order that from a distance you may see me in my large apron, and with a battalion of cups and spoons of all shapes and forms. The other day I upset a tray in the middle of the stairs. The broth went to pay a visit to the cheese and the egg gave the kiss of peace to the meat. Fancy my embarrassment! The *Angelus* was ringing, and I trembled at the thought of arriving in the refectory late, in the

presence of our Mother, Mother Provincial and the other superiors. Happily, there are many good angels here, and they came to the rescue.

Toulouse, September 13, 1896.

We go into retreat on Friday and finish on the 27th. I cannot describe to you the joy that prevails in the novitiate at the prospect. We are counting the days, almost the hours. Although our life, especially in the novitiate, seems to be a perpetual retreat, nevertheless we have an intense desire to draw much nearer to the Heart of Jesus and to be still more united to Him during these few days. It is such a blessing to be able to review one's life in the light of the Exercises and to receive a new impulse to follow in the footsteps of the Divine Master. I recommend myself very particularly to your prayers during this time. . . .

By-by, my dear Mamma. I remain much united to you, more perhaps than you believe. It will soon be a year since we parted for the love of Jesus. Do you remember the last *Magnificat,* chanted on the Saturday evening just before my departure, in our dear chapel? and the roses which my sisters had placed everywhere? and the sky which was so blue that it reminded me of the veil I was going to wear? . . . Oh! with what gusto I sing it now, that *Magnificat* of the joyous sacrifice made within the arms of Jesus! Be united with me in spirit. On the 24th, shall I not hear in the Heart of Jesus, where I shall take up my abode, the echoes of your gladsome strains? You have given a soul, a spouse, to Jesus, and He gives you his Cross, his Heart and his Heaven.

To Michel:

September 26, 1896.

I wish you a very happy feast. . . . But what does that mean? Why, it means nothing less than that I wish you to become a saint. I send you three models to choose from, Aloysius Gonzaga, Stanislas and Berchmans; and I leave you free to choose, if only you walk in the footsteps of one of them. There is no risk in the choice; therein lies true happiness. As I believe Monsieur l'abbé has returned, I hope also you will work hard, that you will learn your Latin and that you will be very good. I am sure all these hopes will be fulfilled. Am I not right?

Toulouse, September 27, 1896.

I must leave you for the adoration. What a consolation to think that one has only to take a few steps to be in the presence of the Sovereign Master of Heaven and earth. The same happiness is yours, my dear Mamma, and I bless God for having placed this supreme comfort within your reach and for uniting us in the Divine Heart, which is so near to you and me. I shall never say enough about the happiness of the religious life or about the incomparable peace one enjoys in it. One may suffer, but Jesus is our support; one may weep, but Jesus is our consoler; and the weightier the cross becomes the more closely is He united to the one who carries it.

Toulouse, November 1, 1896.

Does time go slowly outside the convent? Here it simply flies, and I am frightened by the rapidity of the days and the months. We are close to Heaven, to that dear Heaven where

father awaits us and where we shall so soon join him. How good it is to think of this to-day!

. . . Poor dear sister, how sorry I am to see you back in Angers life again, with its hubbub, its excitement, its absence of order, and all that this entails. What a misery to have to change one's dresses so often, to have veils, gloves and what not to put on. If you only knew how pleasant it is to have but one kind of apparel and not to have to dress up on going out. And yet these exactions of the world may be an occasion of merit. Indeed, I think it would be very meritorious to offer to our Lord every detail of a bothersome toilet and to seek Him only in all that one seems to be doing for the world.

. . . I must tell you now of the progress I have been making—*in the kitchen.* I shall soon be more proficient than our fine cook herself. I know how to mix and skim the soup, how to prepare fried eggs, poached eggs, omelet, and so many things besides. I must add, of course, that I burn the omelet, let the poached eggs run, and fry some eggs to a crisp. Otherwise I am perfect. I cut myself at every turn, scald myself and flood the kitchen floor. Sister cook is a woman of remarkable patience.

To her Sister Yvonne:

December 26, 1896.

. . . Finally, pray hard for me. The good God has given me a splendid mission and a grand vocation, which I must respond to. I feel ever more and more how holy I should be and yet how far from holiness I am. Pray that I may not fear to suffer, after the example of Jesus crucified.

Toulouse, December 26, 1896.

Yes, indeed, silence is at an end and we may now enjoy another chat. It is the dear little Jesus in his Crib that confers this favor by being born for us, and it is He we should thank. I have thought of you often during this Advent and have prayed for you, as I always do. I am here for your good and to obtain for all of you the grace of living as holily and bearing your cross as patiently as possible. I am most unworthy, it is true, of this beautiful rôle of representing you all, each hour of the day, at the feet of our Lord; but as the good God has assigned me this task I can only submit to his good pleasure and trust that He will supply all that is beyond my powers.

A happy and holy New Year, my dear Teresa; but *holy* in the full meaning of the word. I shall not ask God that you may not suffer, for to do so would be a loss of time, and, besides, you would not want me to pray thus; but I shall ask our Lord to be very close to your life and to aid and support you continually. I shall pray that our Blessed Lady, our Mother and our pattern, may make you more than ever sensible of the tenderness of her heart. I shall pray that your good Angel may give you fresh proof daily that he is guarding you in all your ways. My prayer, too, my dear Teresa, will be that our Lord may grant you increased love and strength, that your soul may be enlarged and elevated, and that you may have no thought but for the things of Heaven. Let us live more in the midst of that which passes not. "Let us begin our eternity."

. . . Thanks, my dear Teresa, for your

prayers. I am deeply sensible of my need of them. One must know what it is to be a Réparatrice to understand all that God requires of souls whom He regards, in a manner, as burthened with all the sins of the world. The broader and clearer my horizon becomes the more I am persuaded that our vocation, though splendid, is none the less *terrible,* as was said by a certain Father who knew us well. Such, too, was the mind of our venerated Mother Foundress. She would have none but souls of tried generosity to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and Marie-Réparatrice. Pray, then, and implore in my behalf that I may not prove unworthy of the incomparable grace conferred upon me. The religious vocation is indeed the height of human happiness. May God grant it to your children. Such is my ardent desire.—I should like so much to see my little nephews! Embrace them more tenderly than ever for me, and get them to pray for their aunt. I think of them continually and love them with my whole heart.

A Dieu! Let the Heart of Jesus be our rendezvous during the whole year to come. I wish no longer to live but in and for this Divine Heart. Let us love Him as He knew how to love us and as this feast of Christmas proves Him to have loved us. Thank our dear Jesus for having given me the habit, and pray that I may come a little better prepared to the complete immolation implied in the vows.

In Christo Jesu, devotedly yours,

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

Chapter 9

A little more than a year had elapsed since Marie-Anne had first crossed the threshold of the house at Toulouse. In less than no time she had won, not only the affection but also the esteem and even the secret admiration of Mothers and Sisters alike. To see her so regular in all the exercises of the community, so pleasant and amiable on all occasions, so recollected in chapel,—in a word, so fully inspired by the spirit of her vocation,—one would naturally learn to expect great things of her and look forward to her becoming one of the firmest supports of the Society which was so dear to her. Even when she was a postulant her virtues astonished her superiors. However much she, like the others, might be subjected to the salutary humiliations of the early religious life, her superiority, natural and supernatural, was so visibly evident that she herself could not remain completely ignorant of it. Nevertheless, she had to struggle against her old enemy, discouragement, which occasioned her more than one severe trial during her novitiate; but discouragement is as its root a form of wounded self-love, a manifestation of pride,—that rock which threatens shipwreck to many who are not much drawn to the pleasures of sense or enamored of material treasure,—that vice which made the angels fall from Heaven, and from which our Lord seeks by every means possible to preserve those whom He calls to a special imitation of Him-

self. He knew that this greatest of dangers menaced his child, and in addition He demanded something more from her than from others. He had obtained much and desired more; and the little novice heard in the depths of her heart that call which cannot be expressed in words and which no human words can interpret, but which makes itself continually heard in the hearts of God's chosen ones. God wanted her for Himself. He inspired her to offer herself, and she made the offering with all possible ardor. The merit was all the greater as the soul in such cases must banish all fear and permit itself to be carried away by a very whirlwind of grace, which often bears one into the region of the unknown. God loves an ardor which is uncalculating. He gives ear to the prayers that spring spontaneously from the hearts of those upon whom He has set the seal of his benediction; who find nothing that satisfies them on earth and sigh for the possession of his own eternal loveliness. It is He that inspires generous desires, and He that hearkens to them and blesses them. He responds to them, moreover, notwithstanding the consequences, often unforeseen and nearly always terrible to our carnal minds, of these pure offerings of self; but in doing so He chooses His time; it is as if He were pleased to hear these desires repeated again and again before He lifts the veil and discloses to the soul that is to be wholly His the rough ways it must traverse to reach Him who is its goal.

Marie de l'Agnus Dei was initiated in this process during the retreat at the opening of her second year of novitiate. She had a vague feeling of a special call from God and was aware of a repugnance to responding to it, but generous and ardent as ever, she made an offering which she believed would be the most painful to

nature. Her own notes will best describe to us the need of sacrifice which agitated her soul.

> O my God (she prays), in all sincerity I conjure You to have no regard to my nature or to the repugnances of the flesh, and in spite of me to lead me on to a state of perfection that shall be the most complete, the most absolute, the most *crucifying* to nature, the most glorious to You. Deal with me as if I had no fear, no desires contrary to yours. Guide me by the shortest and, if need be, the most blood-stained path leading to You. My God, I put my whole soul into this prayer and give no heed to the alarms and repugnances of the flesh. O my good Jesus, hear me.
>
> . . . The Father assures me that I am in the state of grace, just as a child is after baptism . . . that our Lord is in me. . . . Overcome by the thought of this purity, this union, I went up to the tribune and, falling on my knees, burst into tears. . . . I seemed to have mounted to Heaven. . . . O Jesus, my dear Jesus!
>
> . . . My Lord and my God, I offer You to-day the sacrifice which costs my nature and my heart most. Seeing You, my dear Jesus, each day by all the sins of the world reduced to the unutterable torments which You endured in your agony and on the cross, when You bore upon your shoulders the weight of all the crimes of mankind and felt, moreover, as though you were repelled and abandoned by your Father, I wish to unite my sufferings to yours and drink of your own bitter chalice. O crucified Jesus, my Spouse and my King, from this day and forever I accept all abandonment or dry-

ness, or aridity, or desolation, which may press hard upon my soul. I am willing to feel myself powerless, useless, miserable and as though, forsaken and thrust aside by You, I were lying lifeless at your feet . . . on the sole condition that by this state of interior martyrdom I may promote your glory and save souls.

I know it is the bitterest part of your Passion that I am embracing; I know that in this state I shall suffer the cruelest of torments; I know that I am exposing myself to the deepest anguish which the heart can feel; but, counting upon your grace, I offer to You the complete sacrifice of so natural a desire as that of tasting in prayer the sweetness of your consolations. I know You withhold them from me only in order to lead me by a way that is surer, though more painful. It is in order to imitate You and follow You more closely that I fix upon the deep interior sufferings of your agony and crucifixion. It is in order to make up for the sensuality of the world that I consent to seal up in my soul this source of happiness and joy. . . . O Jesus, I know You will love me the more for this, and it is this thought that inspires me. . . Provided I may love You exclusively and perfectly and make others love You, take all the rest. . . . Crucify my self-love, my self-interest, my self-will. . . . May your Heart be the altar of my immolation, and your love the fire consuming me, your unworthy victim.

O Mary immaculate, most holy Mother of God, I, Marie de l'Agnus Dei, your most unworthy child, dedicate myself to you this day, that you may dispose of me according to your desire, whilst I resign into your hands my body,

my soul and my heart, reserving nothing to myself and resolving never to take back any part of what I now make yours. Deign, then, O most sweet Mother, to be the purity of my body, the strength and the sanctity of my soul, the joy and the love of my heart. Transform me into yourself, O Mary, that I may become for my beloved Jesus the place of his repose which you have been for Him. . . . I protest, my dear Mother, that I wish to do nothing save through you. You will reign over me from morning till evening and from evening till morning. Most holy, most sweet Mother, oh! how much I love you! I fain would give you, not only all that I have, but a hundred times more. . . . If you were not now in possession of Jesus and his heavenly abode, I should willingly give my life to attain them for you. . . . O Mary, take me, keep me, make me a Mary of Jesus. I beg my good angel to salute you most humbly and to kiss most lovingly your blessed feet in my name.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

. . . Marie-Anne is dead, or at least is dying; Marie de l'Agnus Dei is not yet fully in being. Is it sufficiently true, my dear Jesus, that I am nothing, that this body and soul without a name is really yours? My *ego*—it is Jesus!

After these first emotions she descends to particulars, as indeed must always be done by those who are aiming at complete self-conquest.

Generosity shall be the distinguishing mark of my virtue,—generosity running counter to dis-

couragement, in spiritual desolation, in sickness, in sacrifices, in acts of devotedness.

1. *On waking:* a strong resolution to be courageous and cheerful during the day, in spite of any suffering or depression by which I may be tried.

2. *During meditation:* no discouragement if I should be in a state of complete aridity, and even if I think I could do better than I am doing.

3. *At Mass:* I must encourage myself if I feel desolate,—offer myself generously in union with Jesus as Victim, and keep my soul in peace, happen what may.

4. *At Mother Superior's conferences:* no discouragement when she shows us a point of perfection which I feel I shall never be able to attain.

5. *At the examen:* I must revive my courage if I notice any lack of it during the morning and reëstablish myself in peace and joy for the evening.

The Afternoon

1. *Recreation:* no gloom or depression when I have said something stupid, or committed some fault, or spoken of myself.

2. *During exercise:* again, no depression if I notice that I am little recollected or inclined to ill humor.

3. *Manual work and my particular office:* no harboring of gloomy thoughts tending to discouragement.

4. *At Benediction:* I must not lose heart when I find myself fatigued or without a thought in my mind.

5. *Examen time:* as in the morning.

6. Never go to sleep on a discouraging thought, but on one producing joy and confidence.

7. If I wake up in the night, I must rouse my courage and confidence.

General Points for Examination Morning and Night

Have I given way to discouragement?

1. During my adorations, when I feel as if I were a block of wood before our Lord.

2. During the office, by entertaining gloomy thoughts or by making too much of my distractions.

3. In my relations with Mother Superior, when I do not get the same welcome as usual; when she does not keep me as long as I would like; when she does not seem to make as much of me as my vanity desires; when she does not console me as much as I wish.

4. During my prayers, in general.

Proofs of Generosity with God

At table, never *selecting* my food but taking what happens to be before me.

In my exterior behavior, always showing energy, especially when I am tired, and keeping up my practice of not supporting my back.

Imposing upon myself the use of ejaculatory prayers, especially when I don't feel like making them.

These resolutions never became a dead letter, but faithfully were carried into practice. She struggled to the

utmost against the thought always asserting itself, that she was not doing as much as she could or as she wished. Such never-ceasing anxiety is felt by delicate and generous natures; nevertheless the keen suffering she endured on this account was nothing to what the event showed God had in store for our humble little novice. The reader has noticed that she gives intimations of poor health; not that her health had much deteriorated, but the climate of Toulouse, especially its torrid summers, had somewhat enfeebled her. She had a return of her old troubles in frequent headaches and painful attacks of neuralgia. Towards the end of her novitiate she showed, without its exciting any alarm, the first extraordinary symptoms of the malady which was to be so long in declaring its true nature but so quick in bringing her release. It showed itself in what she called rheumatism of the hands, which made her exceedingly awkward; in a slight weakness of the limbs, and most of all in a sudden inability to sing in choir. Her letters show us how often she had use for her voice, which was of superior quality. Occasionally, when she came to the tribune she had extreme difficulty in enunciating and in finding her speech. This was attributed to the state of her nerves and to her habitual timidity, and was either laughed at or made the subject of severe reprehension. Whole days or weeks would pass without a recurrence of the trouble, and then all of a sudden she would grow hoarse. Meanwhile, to the casual observer, she seemed to be in good health.

The life of the novitiate is monotonous on its surface, and we should have nothing to report about Marie-Anne's novitiate were it not for the account which she herself gave of it in writing to her family. Let us re-

turn to this source to get an idea of her outward life and to penetrate somewhat into the depths of her heart.

Toulouse, January 6, 1897.

I begin high up on the sheet, as I have many things to say to you,—yes, many. Is it possible that little sister is getting discouraged? When our Lord has been so good to her, when He loves her so much and has lavished his graces upon her, she actually thinks she will never be good for anything and must needs "despair of the world and of herself"! If you were left to yourself, I should be the first to tremble, because of ourselves we can have nothing but misery; but our Lord is with you from morning till evening and from evening till morning. When you suffer, it is his divine hand that gives you his cross; when you labor, He is present, to save you one half of the irksomeness; when you weep, He draws nigh and wipes away your tears; when you pray, it is He who prays in you. And all this there is no need of your *feeling*. I know how often one may find a void in the soul,—the absence of God, so to speak,—when all seems lost, all is misery, all is pain, all is fear. Ah! but just here is the triumph of faith, the triumph of abandonment. To be conscious of God in the superior part of the soul, and through the will, at a time when naturally one feels only his miseries, his nothingness—this is faith; this is the pure faith which glorifies God. . . . One great defect which we both have is that we want to *feel* things,—we want to feel ourselves growing in perfection and feel that God is pleased with us and that we are drawing near to Him. In this we seek a natural satis-

faction, and the good God, who knows we are thereby spoiling all his work, sends us the trial of seeing nothing, of feeling nothing, of believing that we are going back, that He is withdrawing Himself from us and that all is lost,—in a word, the trial of discouragement. And shall I tell you the results of discouragement? A soul suffering thus, saddened, tried, advances towards God and is ever gaining ground. A discouraged soul is simply falling back. It is she that creates the distance between our Lord and herself, for He never stops on the way in which He asks us to join Him. And when the soul recognizes her fault and resumes her journey, what is left to her but regret for what she has lost and vexation for having loitered on the way? Oh! then, no more discouragement: it is the very reverse of the spirit of our Lord. Père X used to tell me it was *wounded self-love,* and this I see more clearly every day. We reckon upon our own strength and, in order to punish us, God wills that we shall know our own misery. Let us, then, not count upon ourselves. Let us shut our eyes to everything but God, who permits us and requires of us to lean upon his omnipotence.

There is one maxim that seems to me very just. I have heard it from others and will give it to you. It is this: it is not wise to take some one or other as a model and to be absolutely bent upon copying him or her in everything. Graces differ, as souls differ, and God requires more from some and less from others. Let us admire the progress made and the virtues shown by those about us; let us humble ourselves at the thought of our responding less than they to

grace; let us thank God for the gifts He has bestowed upon such choice souls; and then, with a humble and quiet confidence, let us raise our eyes to Jesus, who is the divine Model, the only Model, of all perfection, and let us adhere to what He requires of us in particular, each moment of the day. I admire and love in Y her charming spirit of charity, her devotedness, her amiable temperament; in Z, her rare combination of firmness and sweetness; in X, so many things which we know. For my part, my Lord, I am content to abandon myself to your divine will, in order to follow it in all things,—deeply penetrated, meanwhile, with a sense of my misery and with confidence in your mercy. Here, in truth, lies virtue, and not elsewhere. Holiness is simply the accomplishment of God's will in our regard; and if God is pleased that we be less perfect but more humble, let us be resigned to see so many defects in ourselves, let us maintain with courage the struggle against ourselves, and let us fling ourselves headlong into a contempt of self and of our corrupt nature, whose continual bent is towards self-admiration and self-esteem.—Really, we are forever seeking natural satisfaction in the supernatural life, and this is our undoing.

As to the world, it assuredly can and should improve: it is individuals that compose society. Let any one become holy, and an entire group of souls will be affected by it. In a Christian family like ours graces come in showers and aids to devotion abound. It is not God that fails us, but we that fail God. Think you it is enough to pass within the enclosure of an order to be a saint? or that we, unlike others, have no combats, no

struggling, no great sufferings? To suppose so would be to misunderstand the religious life, the vocation of Réparatrices. Peace, indeed, we possess, but not without laboring to acquire it. Peace is a treasure, and hence it is no wonder that all the demons in Hell league themselves with external things to rob us of it. We must ever rise above dejection; our thoughts must ever mount Heavenward; we must divinize ourselves, or, in other words, we must bring more of Jesus into our lives. So downward is our tendency and so low-toned our thoughts and affections! at least when we are not ranging among the clouds!—O my God, give us the grace to go simply, sweetly and directly to the Heart of Jesus,—always happy in the thought that He loves us, that we have Heaven awaiting us, and that in spite of our weakness, our misery and our mountains of defects, we are daily advancing towards God, and the more rapidly, perhaps, the less we perceive it.

I must take exception to your calling me grave. Serious I certainly am, and more practical than formerly, but at the same time gay-hearted, "in everything, everywhere and always," and with a terrible proneness to laugh out like a ninny at every trifle. I feel the necessity of joy like this in life. There is no getting on without it. But I am learning here by examples that one may suffer from morning till night, and during the night besides, and yet be overflowing with joy. But this is a virtue. It has to be acquired. . . .

February 5, 1897.

. . . I am somewhat in a hurry to-day, because my delicious office of sacristan takes up

nearly all my time on feast-days. But I shall give you all the time that is left me, and the good God will see that you have no reason to complain. I am as happy as I can be in my position. It is a happiness which each minute renews and augments. To be so closely associated with the Divine Master, to be never more than a few steps from Him, and to be occupied with Him directly the whole day—what shall I say of such happiness? There is no telling you what I feel when I think that I, who have so often offended Him, am charged to watch over everything that belongs to or concerns the King of kings! The angels themselves do not come so near his throne. I imagine they envy my happiness when I rub down the door of the tabernacle and when there is nothing more between Jesus and myself than the thickness of the little door, which his divine eyes penetrate and through which my heart has quickly found access to Him.—Twenty times a day do I find some excuse for going into the sanctuary. I should be glad if all the candles should burn out by turns and thus give me the happiness of continually changing them. One needs to have been there oneself, just in front of the Blessed sacrament and all but touching the ostensorium, to understand what one feels at such a moment. The gold surrounding the sacred species and casting its reflection upon them, and still more, undoubtedly, the invisible presence of Jesus, give them a tint which is not of this earth. When viewed from so near they seem to live, to look, to wish to speak. Oh! it will take an eternity for us to comprehend what Jesus is in the Sacred Host!

To her Sister Yvonne:

Toulouse, April 20. 1897.

. . . The religious vocation is so great a grace, my little sister, that we shall never have a sufficient understanding of it. Though I have been living here these eighteen months, I am only beginning to get an idea of the infinite graces contained in the divine call, but each day I get to know them better. A generous soul should find in a life like ours incalculable treasures; for even I, who am so tepid and feeble, have already found in it so many marvels. Oh! if the peace of the religious life were but known, or its sweet charity, or the help derived from intercourse with such kind superiors, or the graces of each passing day, how many souls would be drawn to it who now know nothing of these things! Let us thank Him for having made choice of us.—I am speaking to you already as if you had reached your goal, my dear sister. Well, that is because I always fancy I see you following the career you are going to embrace. I think of you so often as under the veil. Soon, soon, perhaps! My dear little Yvonne, if you only knew what it is to belong only to God! I shall not conceal from you, however, that to be his alone one must suffer much and incessantly. If I did not make this plain to you now, you might well accuse me later of having deceived you. One should be convinced on entering the convent that one enters in order to suffer; and then all things become natural—trials, sufferings and the rest. But at the bottom of suffering happiness is found, and God measures it by the greatness of the sacrifice. —This is a serious enough letter, my dear little

sister, and I feel like beginning a fifth page which would be a little less grave than the previous ones. But time is wanting, and I have only enough left to embrace you tenderly, as I love you tenderly in our Lord.

Toulouse, April 19, 1897.

My Dear Jacques:

You wonder, perhaps, why I am writing to you when, on your part, you never *overwhelm* me with letters from yourself. Well, it may be because I love you more than you love me; seeing that I am an elder sister, living far away and never to come back again, whilst you are my dear and much beloved little brother, who are to take father's place and be one day a soldier of Christ, in whom I feel an interest both as a sister and as a religious. With this preamble (a little malicious, isn't it?), I wish you a joyous alleluia! I charge one of the nightingales who will resume their singing at Le Patys to carry this message from me. You must listen well, and when you hear one of their tribe singing in the evening when the moon is up, you must think of me, and you will ask the good God to bless your elder sister.

Toulouse, April 20, 1897.

. . . Well, sister dear, courage! Life is often hard, it is true, but it ends in Heaven, which is all the brighter the darker the cross that hides it from our view. You must not imagine there is no suffering in the convent. Souls not called thither would find enough to make them recoil. The road to Heaven, from whatever point it

be entered, is never strewn with roses. But one of the graces of the religious life is to learn to love the thorns, and even to bind them around one's brow. Can you believe that a grace such as this can fall to every one's lot? . . . Courage and generosity are what we need. God will supply the rest.

To her Sister Yvonne:

April 22, 1897.

So you are going to be with Mamma at your quiet Patys and are to have the good God so near and the well-ordered life that leads to Him. You should now be able to discover the way you are to follow, when all is so quiet about you that you can approach the great question with undisturbed mind. . . . It was there in our dear little chapel, or quite alone in the most solitary nook in the woods, that I found my destiny and became convinced that our Lord wanted me to be a Réparatrice, though it might cost me much. I am quite sure that God is bringing you back to Patys in order to make known to you in the midst of quiet the secret of his designs in your behalf.—Oh! yes, my darling sister, I have passed through all your uncertainty and gloom. How often did I feel quite blinded and knew not whither to turn. But our Lord unveiled all, arranged all, made all so clear, in his own good time; and when at last I reached the goal and cast a glance backwards, I was dumbfounded at the all-powerful action of grace. Hope and pray, and our Lord and our Blessed Lady will come to your aid.

Yes, I have spoken to you of suffering so as not to leave you under an illusion; but this suf-

fering, of which you seek the cause, cannot, I believe, be understood till one has experienced it, for it is beyond all explanation. To express all in a word, the suffering of the religious life comes from God's hiding Himself. When that occurs there is pleasure in nothing else. The soul, solitary and troubled, sees nothing, understands nothing, turns this way and that to find the presence of its Lord, but all in vain, as God has effectually concealed Himself. When God does not manifest Himself, nothing else gives consolation or pleasure. Duty seems irksome, the rule is austere, prayer is cold and the cross presses heavily. God is undoubtedly present, for without Him we could not live, but his presence is so well veiled or disguised that there is no discovering Him. He seems to find pleasure in withdrawing from the soul. But how describe all this in detail. It would require the pen of a Saint Teresa. This interior cross has its tortures, and only actual experience of them can realize what they are like. It is in this spiritual death that God forms our souls; it is the crucible in which He purifies the metal which He wishes to use for his glory. Reason and reflection tell us as much, but nature revolts. It seems to conspire with all outside enemies to overwhelm the soul that would reign over it. And God conceals Himself! Oh, how one must struggle to carry his cross to the end, to permit himself to be bruised, destroyed! But let me repeat, I am unable to describe such suffering. I believe that all religious souls pass through it in some degree, and that it differs with individual ones. Perhaps what I have said will only trouble you the more. If it does,

you will tell me, but you must not be disturbed. We must leave all to God and not forestall his action. He does not send suffering till after He has given one the strength to endure it. This strength is not always *felt,* but it exists, and the soul, notwithstanding its struggles, is going forward. All this is very serious and touches the very core of the religious life. But not everything in religion wears this somber hue. One of the sweetest comforts of the religious life is the direction of superiors, who are for us our Lord made visible. If you only knew what deep respect we feel for them as we stand in their presence!

They know us so well and love us so much! What a grace it is to have their virtues under our eyes and their direction within our reach! . . .

Courage, sister dear, courage! Be *you* more generous than I and tell the good God from the bottom of your heart that you are willing to suffer for Him all that He wishes you to suffer. The more you are disposed to be generous and energetic in his service the more He will aid you.

My Darling Sisters:

. . . You want me to give you some little account of what I am doing. I assure you, there is but little change in my occupations. This month I am sweeping instead of washing the dishes—and that is all. I must add that I have been breaking up house. I am now in a room by myself. It is really palatial. First of all, I can make believe I have a special dressing-room, for the floor is partly boarded, partly tiled, and

my dressing-table is on the tiles in a sort of alcove. There are *eight* different kinds of paper on the walls. The room is two storys high and has a window which serves as a balcony, for it opens on a flight of steps, up and down which all the world passes,—which, of course, delights me. On account of this position of the window we call this "the room that takes the air by proxy," or "the room in the tower." I am very happy in it. All through the day I am glad to think I shall be back in it in the evening, quite alone with the good God and in the midst of my eight varieties of paper. The good God is *so* good in giving shelter in his house to a miserable creature like me.

I must tell you that a great miracle is being wrought here,—yes, a miracle. . . . The other day the Mother Under-Mistress said to me, without the least ceremony: "Go, sit down at the sewing-machine and stitch up whatever is handed to you." You can imagine the situation. Mother was gone before I could recover from my astonishment. There was only one thing to be done—I must obey without saying a word. I went over to the instrument, which you will remember I always regarded as a horrible monster. Up came a sister who certainly had no suspicion of my utter incapacity, and said, "You will do it this way, and that way," and planted me in a chair, where I sat with a curious sense of responsibility for the machine and for the work assigned me. You can fancy me making a good sign of the cross. "Good, good for you!" I was soon exclaiming. I succeeded so well that I have returned to the machine every day and am now executing every movement

without any assistance.—If all my old-time enemies thus submitted to my empire, what a conquest I should be making! But alas!!

To her Sister Yvonne:

May 16, 1897.

I begin by embracing you with all the affection of an elder sister, first, for your eighteen years and then for your feast-day. My wish for you is everything our Lord may desire for you, and especially the grace of giving yourself to Him soon. I offered yesterday's communion for you, and on the 19th I shall also have you much in mind during my prayers. If you would like to meet me on that day, place yourself at the feet of our dear Lord between nine and ten, and I shall be there also, at adoration. It is agreed that we shall ask for very great graces, particularly the one we both have at heart.—"If thou didst know the gift of God!" . . . If you knew the joy, the peace, the calm, which true religious reap from immolation, you would thirst still more to come and find how sweet the Lord is. The novitiate, with its whole life regulated by obedience, with its great charity, its particular instructions and its strong formation, is really a little corner of Heaven for any one who refuses nothing to our Lord. Unfortunately, our natures shrink from sacrifice, and hence we do not always enjoy the deep happiness that is within our reach; but this depends upon ourselves, not upon God. As regards yourself I am sure you will be willing to give yourself wholly to Him, as He will give Himself wholly to you.

Toulouse, May 30, 1897.

The longer I live the more I see that God alone is our all,—here in the present life, as He will be in eternity. Let us seek to make God the one dominant presence everywhere. The realization of this endeavor is indeed the great work of our short existence here. It is incredible how clear things become under this divine light. The more we seek God the more worthy He shows Himself of our seeking. Oh! let us live no longer but for Heaven,—for that Heaven which appears even now behind the cross, just as it does behind the flowers that sometimes bloom among the thorns. True happiness, you will agree with me, is to walk thus with the heart raised aloft and our steps going straight to God, amidst the various duties that make up our days.

June 25, 1897.

. . . And I, Mamma dear, shall be just as happy to see you. We have been separated for two years, a long enough time indeed; but still the day may come when we shall meet less often. Hence I feel that our Lord should become more and more the one real and only bond uniting us, and that we should dwell together in his Heart, enjoying there one another's company without fear of separation.

Toulouse, August 29, 1897.

My Darling Teresa:

The peace of Jesus! Peace to your new abode and to that little nook, so dear already, where I am fond of visiting you in spirit! Peace to all your surroundings—peace within

you and about you! May our Divine Lord reign within those walls; may our Blessed Lady assist you there, and may the angels protect you! May you find there true happiness, which is that given of God, and may you live there the true life, the life that God asks of us. May God bless everything about you, your trees and your fields and all that can blossom or ripen for you.

I should have been glad to have paid you a visit (in spirit) on the first day if I had known the date of your taking possession of your new quarters; but on that day, at least I had the inspiration to pray very particularly for you. I was somewhat astonished to feel myself all but impelled to ask for special graces for you, and I felt a bit mystified; but all was made clear when I learned that you were arriving at X at the moment when I was on my knees before the Blessed Sacrament and praying that our Lord might aid you. Oh! how closely united we are, even when separated!

I notice that I have really been speaking to both[1] of you, and indeed what I have said comes from deep down in my heart. It is with a sister's thoughts that I think of both of you, there in the heart of my dear Anjou, and both are the object of the same affection and the same good wishes.

A Dieu! Be happy, but still more, *holy.* Once more, in words so dear to a Réparatrice, may the peace of Jesus be with you! Let us be united in affection and prayer in the Divine Heart of Jesus, in which I am wholly yours.

[1] She has been using *vous,* plural, instead of *tu,* singular, employed in addressing relatives.

Toulouse, September 5, 1897.

My own Dear Catherine:

For the fourth time in three weeks I have changed my room. I am now living in the paradise of Lady Poverty! But with what pleasure and satisfaction for the heart. Just one little wall separates me from the chapel. With this advantage I might easily have failed to notice my poor little table, which is so small that I have to place half of my things on the floor or on my bed. The selfsame table, by the way, serves as a glass-case—without the glass. Imagine a chocolate crate set on end and divided in the middle by a small board. Instead of a door, a cretonne curtain marked with black and white squares! This is my glass-case, my étagère, my dressing-table, my library, my desk, my sewing-box, etc., etc. . . . Everything else is in keeping. Last night I could not sleep for very joy, to think that at last my room had some suggestion of Bethlehem, Egypt and Nazareth.

On Friday, Mother Superior gave us some comments on a conference of our venerated Mother Foundress on the solitude of the heart which is needed in order to hear the voice of our Lord. I listened in my own name till the end of the discourse, but just as we were about to rise and go I was so enthusiastic over what I had heard that I exclaimed, "Oh! if Catherine had heard that, how she would have drawn profit from it!" So I straightway took the resolution to make profit for two out of the counsels I had been receiving. After speaking of silence of the tongue and silence of action (the latter means avoiding unnecessary noise), our ven-

erated Mother came to silence of the heart, and dwelt particularly on silence of the *imagination.* This last—is it not particularly suited to *us two?* Make an effort to silence the imagination, and you will see how difficult it is. Since this morning I have caught myself wandering as often as sixty times. Impossible to quiet this domestic ninny of ours. You may bring him back home, but he is off in an instant. And what leagues he does travel! What victories he gains, what conquests he makes! The net result is usually something less of true fervor and genuine virtue. It is clear to me that this terrible faculty must be subdued; it must be directed Heavenward; it must not be allowed to image forth anything but Jesus or to seek anything but Him; and we should take advantage of it for self-humiliation and annihilation. *Deo gratias!* Alleluia! Alleluia!

But I seem to be meditating aloud. You will scold me for being over serious. I am not in low spirits, nor a bit too grave; but in the novitiate all things turn Heavenward.

I have just been given a picture to paint in haste. Is this a sign that I have been writing at too great length and must now stop? Perhaps. The picture is just to form a setting for a photograph and is to represent the little Jesus surrounded by crosses and seeming to reflect on whom He shall bestow them. To me, Jesus, to me! Give Catherine the gilded one, and let me have the big heavy one, like your own.

A Dieu, my dearest sister. After this long heart-to-heart talk, need I tell you I love you as of yore? Surely not. We know that Jesus

keeps us united more and more. Oh! let us be saints, for his glory!

In Corde Jesu,
MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

Toulouse, September 24, 1897.

My Darling Yvonne:

The peace of Jesus! It is very long since I wrote you last, but how often I have thought of you! I have not forgotten, I assure you, that Jesus has called you to follow Him, and I beg Him to hasten the hour when you will give yourself to Him. How often, prostrate at his feet, have I not asked Him to grant you the grace He has given me. Ah! what are we doing on this earth if we are not loving, or if we are serving ill, our Lord and our God? This, of course, is not the case with you. No, no, I am quite sure of the contrary; but how I wish we would fling ourselves with a sort of holy recklessness into the service of the Divine Master! Yet I cannot understand myself when I think that I have done nothing purely for Him during the whole twenty years of my life!—Make haste, sister dear, and be ready, that our Lord may visit you. Meditate on the parable of the ten virgins. The nuptial robe that must be worn is purity of heart and the humility that lowers itself and permits Jesus to clothe us with Himself; the oil is meekness; the flame is prayer and generosity. The sleep that steals upon the ten virgins is a total abandonment to the will of God and forgetfulness of self. The call which is heard is the thought that God desires us and the joy that it begets in us. The awakening of the virgins is devotion and love.

—Let us make ready: Jesus is coming: *you* He will have for fiancée and *me* for spouse. Equally merciful to us two, in his ineffable goodness He asks for our hearts. *Exite obviam Ei!* Let us meet Him on the way, and let us not leave unfruitful the grace He has given us. Oh! if you only knew what the religious vocation means.—I should like to learn—*yes* or *no*—whether you are decided as to the order. I have been praying the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and would like to know the result. If I am too curious, tell me so.

To Michel:

September 29, 1897.

I am not forgetting it is your feast-day, and although I am a little late, I send my good wishes as if I were in time, and a picture besides. I shall pray to the good God for you, that you may be a great Christian like father, and even a great saint, like your heavenly patron. My wish for your feast is that you may have a better supply of wits than I, and that you may know better how to practice the virtues. Just imagine! The day before yesterday there was quite a storm, and yesterday as I was walking in the garden I noticed that nearly all the sanctuary plants were tilted over on the ground. "Ah!" said I, "what a fine chance to perform an act of charity!" So I placed my book under my arm and proceeded to raise up the plants, one after the other. I had got near the last and was feeling I had had enough of it when I heard a voice in great excitement crying out, "Why, she doesn't understand—see what she is doing!" I looked up and saw the sacristan with

arms aloft and a look of despair on her face. "Why, my dear good sister," she exclaimed, "they have been turned down on purpose!" You can imagine how I laughed. I had to undo my task and set each plant in its first position. They had been turned over to save them from the wind. This agreeable little task shortened somewhat my spiritual reading. When you want to practice charity, don't imitate me.

To her Mother:

Toulouse, October 10, 1897.

. . . Yes, we shall see one another soon, please God. I bless the leaves as they fall and the increasing cold and the winter which is on its way, because all this is the prelude to the time that awakens sweet recollections and gives a radiance to blessed hopes. I am very unworthy to pronounce my vows, and this I know better than any one else. But none the less I hope that our infinitely merciful Lord will admit me to them. When I think of it,—and I am always thinking of it,—my heart overflows with happiness. My sisters in religion twit me on my "love of winter." It is not winter that I love but the Infant Jesus in the Crib.

Toulouse, October 10, 1897.

My Very Dear Teresa:

I am writing to convey to you my best wishes and to tell you how very specially I shall pray for you on the Feast of Saint Teresa, whom we love so much. What shall be my wish, my dearest sister, if it be not that you may advance in the science of the saints and serve God always better and better. Others may wish you re-

pose, happiness, the joys of this world and all that passes with time. These things are excellent when they help us to serve God. But we look higher than that, and the love of Christ for us has been too great to allow of our seeking anything but his glory, whilst contemning ourselves. May Saint Teresa, my dear little sister, give you her great heart, her great faith, her great love. Therein is true joy, the joy that fills the hearts of saints. It is this I shall ask for you, and I beg you to ask the same for me at the hands of this dear Saint who came so near to being my mother in the spirit. You must not think I regret my not being at Carmel. I am dead in love with my vocation, and I feel no attraction to anything outside of it. We have here much of Saint Teresa's spirit. . . . With the rule and the spirit of Saint Ignatius that is in perfect accord, and there is nothing so beautiful as our Constitutions. Don't laugh at my enthusiasm: it is part of our *esprit de corps*. What good would a soldier be who had in his heart no love for his flag?

To her Sister Yvonne:

For some time you have been asking me to give you a picture of the religious life, and consequently of the life I am actually leading. I made some little study of the other orders, more particularly of certain ones, before deciding, but my knowledge of them is small compared with what I know of this dear Society—to me the *beau ideal,* naturally enough. Well. to give you all needed information about this Society, to which our Divine Lord may by his grace call you, I shall say a few words about our

dear life of reparation. . . . Our life is divided between contemplation and action, thus responding to the different attractions of souls. After the hours of prayer come the duties of one's office. In these are found opportunities of practicing both devotedness and self-denial. Laundry, clothes-room, kitchen, infirmary, sacristy, dispensary (a sort of storeroom), suggest a few of the charges. The novices have much sweeping to do, and there is all manner of merit in it, if they are willing to reap it. Besides all this we have works of zeal, such as the catechizing of poor children and first communion retreats. After the vows one may be employed with women's retreats, Children of Mary, the *Œuvre Apostolique,* or the like. . . . To give repose to the heart and recruit our spiritual strength, we have about seven hours of prayer, —and this we certainly prize,—and during the night, though not *every* night, an hour of adoration, which is delicious. . . .

And now, my dear, a word or two on other points about which you have been inquiring. Our life is not only the grace of graces but the acme of all happiness. The novices are gay-hearted, to a degree incredible to any one who has not seen them. Indeed they cannot contain their joy. As to obedience, it is our great comfort and delight. It is what makes our life so easy and agreeable. The superiors are so good that everything they wish seems equally good. As to openness of heart, perhaps not all find it easy in practice, but for my part I have never found the least difficulty in it; in fact, it has been a source of the greatest happiness to me. I believe I may say that the religious life, of itself,

tends to openness. The fact of living with those who have but one aim, one desire and one means of realizing it, naturally begets an unreserved openness and frankness; and hence I cannot understand how any one can conceal the least thing from the mistress of novices. To feel that one is perfectly known to her is to enjoy the greatest peace. The life of the novice is made up of quite a number of set occupations. From morning to night every minute is under regulation (and the whole night, for that matter, as sleeping falls under the rule); and in close succession come conferences, exercises, manual work, study of the rules, work of one's office, hours of prayer. This dividing up of our time is a real mortification of the will, which is loth to be summoned away continually from work begun. It is a good antidote against self-love; and I may say in general that self-love is not at home here and, whether it likes it or not, must decamp.—Yesterday we had a delightful Saint Stanislas' Feast. The altar was covered with lilies. The Mothers chanted deliciously, whilst we novices remained quietly in our stalls and listened (it is not so every day), and the whole house did its best to make the day for us a holy and happy one. How I do wish that next year may find you under the white veil!

Toulouse, November 23, 1897.

My Dear Mamma:

With what pleasure I have torn up my Sunday letter and am sending you to-day the announcement of the incomparable grace I have received at the hands of our Divine Lord. I

have been informed that I am to make my vows! Oh! the goodness of God! This is the one thought to which I can give utterance since learning of the happiness in store for me. I am only beginning to realize to the full this divine favor, by which at first I was simply dazed. Though hoped for and looked forward to, it is absolutely new and delicious now that it has been received.

The dream of my childhood and the one object of my life for many a year is about to be realized. I am going to be a religious and the eternal spouse of the adorable Master, who is pleased to lavish his favors upon the least worthy of his creatures. Oh! pray for me and get others to pray that I may prepare in earnest for this blessed day of the Nativity, which in giving me my Jesus will bring to realization all my past hopes!

Let us bless Him in unison. Never shall I be able to give expression to the deep happiness produced in me by this announcement. Everything else seems forgotten, the past and regrets for the past, the present with its difficulties—all seems to vanish before this blessed future in which Jesus alone is visible!

To Teresa:

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis![1] Yes, Jesus will have me, and in a few days the great King of Heaven will unite Himself to his poor little creature. How God will be glorified when his Eternal Word will thus abase Himself, and how deep will be the peace of the soul thus united to its

[1] Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will!

sovereign Lord! Bless God for me, for I am too happy, I am overwhelmed with graces!

. . . Truly, at a moment like this, one has need of humbling oneself and suffering, in order to resemble Him the more. The soul should deem it treason to be drawn to anything that is not simply Himself. Jesus becomes so great and the world so little that the world is lost in the Infinite to which the soul is drawn. Anything in the shape of suffering, however intensely it be felt, seems a very balm to the soul, because it brings it nearer to Jesus.

Our good little novice had soon an unexpected opportunity of practicing this drawing near to Jesus by sacrifice. It so happened that, owing to most exacting duties, not a single member of her family could be with her on that Christmas Night. She had come to Toulouse alone, and alone she was to consummate on earth her brief but close union with her Lord. The disappointment was keenly felt, more indeed than she allowed it to appear. But it was in keeping with the mysterious designs of Providence in regard to this child of predilection that the Great Day should be spent as it was. Before beginning her retreat she knew that no one would be present at her vows, and she endeavored to console her mother by the following letter:—

My Very Dear Mamma:

The peace of Jesus! May our Lord's will be accomplished in all things! He knows better than we what is for our good. Your letter gave me much pain, as you can imagine, for all was so unexpected. But Mother Superior, in

her kind and gentle way, helped me to accept the will of our Divine Lord, and I, like you, made an offering of all, and with all my heart. The thought of *your* sacrifice afflicts me more than that of my own. I would willingly suffer more if it made you suffer less.

I shall feel your heart very close to mine on that beautiful night, and you shall have a large share in the fruits of my prayers and my vows. My good father will be there at my side, and it is he that I shall charge with the transmission to you, in God's name, of the graces our Lord will grant me in your behalf.

Evidently, Mamma dear, the good God wishes to prove to you that you have not made the sacrifice by halves, and He would have me feel that I am not a Réparatrice to no purpose. Blessed be his name! Jesus so completely deserted in his Crib wishes us to share in his loneliness. Jesus so neglected in the tabernacle would have us bear some resemblance to Himself as the Victim. Let us bless Him from the bottom of our hearts, and may the *Magnificat* of love and abandonment rise more joyously than ever from the depths of our souls.

Having consented to this sacrifice, she turned with all her heart's enthusiasm to Him who was the one attraction of her being. During those blissful days which preceded one of the great epochs of her religious life, God was pleased to disclose to her the pact which He was going to ask her to make with Him,—a pact requiring her to suffer all the rest of her life, to die in consequence of these sufferings, and in this way to make reparation for souls, in union with her Lord Jesus Christ.

Of her own accord she had offered Him many a sacrifice, but in regard to such souls God has wonderful designs of his own which are beyond their ken. With an exactness which seems to us astonishing, now that we know how all ended, He made known to her during her retreat something of what He was going to require of her. That she understood it well enough to be frightened by it, even to the depths of her soul, is beyond all doubt; that she understood it well enough to have all the merit of accepting it is no less certain; but that she was able from the first to forecast all the consequences of the generous act by which she responded to the divine solicitations is hardly probable. Time is needed for our understandings to mount into the region of divine illumination. Time is no less needed for our hearts to accept to the very dregs our chalice of bitterness. Hence God does not expect us to understand all at a glance, and light is given in proportion to our strength. What God wants of us is fervor and promptitude in accepting that much of the divine will which is revealed to us. We shall find Marie-Anne, for a considerable time after she had made her oblation, still cherishing the desire of devoting herself to external labors for the divine glory, the desire of becoming useful in a human point of view to her dear Society, and in particular the desire of going out to the foreign missions; and yet it was the very sacrifice of these desires, one after the other, that was to become the root of her spiritual growth and was to make of her, better than if her desires had been realized, the victim she had ever longed to become. We, who can now view the life of Marie de l'Agnus Dei in its true perspective, cannot fail to see and admire the perfect unity as well as the greatness of God's designs in regard to this soul and the

fidelity with which she responded to them. We are now nearing the culminating point of her brief earthly career; we are approaching the mystery which made of her life an example and a lesson,—though indeed the mystery was guarded so jealously that we shall never have an exact knowledge of its details. We shall endeavor, however, to discover in the notes of her retreat some of the lights by which she was favored to guide her into the path which God would have her tread.

> Our Lord (she writes) asked me if I would accept a life made up entirely of crosses and sacrifices. As I cannot refuse Him anything, I answered *yes,* with all my heart. He then showed me an image of a heart surrounded with thorns, as his own Heart is, with a sword buried deep in it, and a bleeding wound, and from the heart was growing a lily in the bud. He then said to me: "You will feel the wound but you will not see the flower." And as My soul was overflowing with joy and my heart all aflame with the desire of pleasing our Lord, I accepted all, on condition that He would aid me. Now I am awaiting desolation without fear, and I hope, with the grace of God, to show myself, not a craven, but courageous and generous. . . .
>
> . . . It seemed to me that God was sending his angel to announce to me that He made choice of my infinite lowliness in order to make his infinite mercy shine out the brighter. Why not believe that the good God can make something, even out of me?
>
> . . . How I struggled before offering all, interior and exterior alike, that our Lord might

mortify all! How humiliating to be so faint-hearted! All was at last yielded up, and I beg of our Lord to give me nothing back. I have embraced the cross,—the cross of my vows,—*O bona crux, tam amata, tamdiu desiderata!* [1] Our Lord looked upon me affectionately and said, *"Mecum!* [2] I then understood all, willed all, accepted all. *O bona crux!* Thanks, Jesus! Jesus and my soul!

Our lot may well be envied. To live but to die as victims—how beautiful! May our death truly result from our sufferings, from sufferings in reparation, generously accepted, bravely endured.

Divine love, it is clear, did not triumph without a struggle in this angelic soul. Suffering is so hard to accept, even at a distance and in prospect. But once the act of love and abandonment is accomplished, God comes to the aid of his creature and communicates to him something of the divine folly which incited Himself on his way to Calvary.

God was satisfied: the oblation was made absolutely and unreservedly. The victim of his choice was now his; He was now to proceed with his work without let or hindrance, for his designs were known and accepted. The following notes from her retreat will show us what Marie de l'Agnus Dei was looking forward to when she made her public act of consecration to God:—

Quid retribuam Domino? [3]
Calicem salutaris accipiam. [4] . . . Yes, the

[1] O good cross, so much loved, so long desired!—*St. Andrew, Apostle.*
[2] With Me!
[3] What return shall I make the Lord?
[4] I will take the chalice of salvation.

chalice of sacrifice, the chalice of humiliation, the chalice of renunciation, the chalice of complete abnegation; this chalice will I take, with the grace it confers. *Et nomen Domni invocabo.*[1] My life shall be one of prayer, ever turned to Him as its center, because without Him I am without strength, whilst with Him I can do all things.

The cross . . . the heart! Here is all my wealth—all my life. And if I suffer, it is what is fitting and right. *Licet pati.*[2]

"Licet pati!" writes a religious who knew her well, "we are free to suffer." Yet a little while, and Suffering, that wonderful artificer in the service of Jesus and beloved companion of his mortal life, will answer the summons of the little spouse of the Divine Word and finish his work in her soul. Suffering will have complete possession of her, and for years together we shall see her slowly mounting her Calvary with nought of bitterness or regret in her heart or on her lips. God had given her all, she had made an oblation of all, and she might have said at the end: 'I am happy: My object in life has been realized: I now possess nothing. . . . He whom I cherish more than all else has taken all!' Surely, if unfulfilled desire had any place in Heaven, the angels would envy the lot of this child who, whilst her earthly frame was wasting away, was adorned with an interior beauty which was all the more resplendent in the eyes of the Eternal."

On the last of these days of waiting, on the very eve of Christmas, she grouped together in her thoughts all

[1] And I will call upon the name of the Lord.
[2] It is allowed to suffer.

those whom she loved most on earth and wrote them the following letter:—

To all of you whom I love so much, my very dear Mamma, my darling brothers and sisters,
The peace of Jesus!

The King of Heaven has chosen me for spouse, and on Christmas Night we shall make the contract of the eternal union. You will not be present at the celebration of these heavenly nuptials, but I shall bid the angels convey to you some echoes from it and to sing to your hearts the sweet canticle they chant for us here.

And at the hands of our Divine King you will receive the wedding-gifts. To us He will give his peace, to you his joy. Perhaps He will also give you his cross, or at the very least the hard wood of his Crib; but have no fear; He gives also his Heart, which has a solace for every ill, and the tender kisses of a Child, which make all bitterness sweeter than honey.

Oh! let me chant his love, and be not astonished if my heart is overflowing with joy, for it is sweet indeed to be the object of his love!

In Him is all that is strong and all that is tender; in Him is all grace and all happiness. To suffer for Him is a joy; to suffer with Him is repose for the soul. Here below He gives us all that may aid and elevate and promises we shall soon be in possession of Heaven and its infinite joys.

It is He that re-unites what love for Him has severed, and restores what has been lost by separation. It is He that will be present, with you and me; it is in his Heart I see you and through his Heart I love you. A Happy Christmas to you all, and in his name!

. . . The ceremonies at the vows are in brief as follows. Before the midnight Mass and after the singing of the *Veni Creator* and the *Monstra te esse Matrem,* I go up to the communion-rail, accompanied by Reverend Mother Superior and Mother Assistant. The Father puts the customary questions, the first of which is, "Daughter, what askest thou?" followed by others which I cannot recall. He then hands me the crucifix of the vows, after blessing it, and then the heart, to be worn upon the breast. Whilst Mother Superior is adjusting the heart the Father says these words, which Jacques will translate for you better than I: *"Ponat Cor suum Deus ut signaculum super cor tuum, et memento quia fortis est ut mors dilectio.*[1] The blue veil is next received, the Father reminding the recipient that the yoke of the Lord is sweet and his burden light. Then the Mass begins, and proceeds in the usual manner down to the *Domine, non sum dignus,* after which we rise again and go up to the communion-rail. The priest takes the Sacred Host as in giving communion and approaches us. And it is there, in the immediate presence of Jesus, who is about to give Himself to me, that I recite the formula of the vows, meanwhile holding a lighted candle in my hand. The Father then gives Holy Com-

[1] May God place his Heart as a seal upon thine, and be thou mindful that love is strong as death.

munion to the too happy spouse of Jesus, and the rest ends as usual, except that one heart beats more quickly than ordinarily as it rests on the Heart of Jesus and there is high festival among the angels and saints who stand grouped about the sanctuary.

At the close, the *Magnificat* is sung, with a fervor that cannot be imagined.

I am sending to each of you a little souvenir of my vows, which you will keep as a reminder of this delicious feast. The Infant Jesus will Himself bring to you all that I have trusted to his conveyance. *He* can see you, and He is always close to you. My dear father, who will be at my side at the moment of my vows, will also transmit to you many things in my name.

A Dieu, dearest Mamma and darling brothers and sisters. Recommend to our Lord her whom He vouchsafes to unite with Himself.

I embrace you with all the tenderness of a daughter and a sister, and I remain intimately united with you in our Lord.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI, S. M. R.

All took place as she described, and again her mother was the first to catch an echo from this heavenly festival.

Toulouse, December 25, 1897.

My Dearest Mamma:

The peace of Jesus! To you my first written words on this heavenly day, as my first thoughts took their flight to you during the night! May my Divine Spouse Jesus give you, one and all, his peace and his joy. I am writing under the glance of my crucifix of the vows, under the reflection of my blue veil, under the radiance

of the heart which rests upon mine.—All this is perfect. I have begged Jesus to make you feel at a distance something of its heavenly sweetness.

December 26.

I wished to begin my letter last evening in order that you might have at least something out of this day which is like no other in our lives.

Thanks, in the first place, for your dear letters. I was so happy to get a letter from each one of you. I felt you all very near me in thought and affection.

And now a few details about my Christmas Night, to enable you to picture it to yourselves as perfectly as possible.

Mother Superior allowed me to stay up before the ceremony, and I spent a good part of my time at the back of a small tribune, in happy anticipation of the great moment.

The ceremony was set down for a quarter of twelve. After the *Veni Creator* and the *Monstra te,* Rev. Père de ——— gave a charming discourse, which came straight from his heart. I had not expected him to speak, but Mother Superior wanted to give me a surprise. He applied the three vows to the Infant in the Crib, showing that it was the charm of the three virtues in Him that drew me to religion. He then spoke of my mission as a Réparatrice and of the treasures I shall find, enabling me to fulfill it, in the Heart of the Lamb of God. He had some kind words for you also, dwelling on the generosity with which you gave me up, however sensible of the sacrifice. I then received the cross, the heart and the veil: the cross as the

most precious pledge of the love of Jesus, the heart to enable me to carry the cross, and the veil as a spouse of the Lamb.

It was at the communion of the first Mass that I pronounced my three vows, just before receiving. I had the good fortune to have two additional Masses for thanksgiving,—and oh! what a blissful hour I spent, an hour never to be forgotten, an hour passing all description.

I could not make up my mind to go to the refectory for the collation: it appeared like sinking to a much lower level.

What I feel now is that nothing can remove the presence of Him who becomes *all* in life, and that all may be done with Him and for Him.

Chapter 10

After her vows Marie de l'Agnus Dei was looking forward to a change of residence from the novitiate to one of the other houses of the Society. She remained some days at Toulouse without knowing her destination, but was finally ordered to Bordeaux. It was a disappointment keenly felt though she never spoke of it. She had hoped to be assigned either to Le Mans or to Nantes, either of which places was near enough to Angers to permit of visits from her family, which had been separated from her for two years. Yet the following letter to her mother breathes only peace and that fine good humor which was habitual to her.

Bordeaux, January 23, 1898.

Thanks for your very kind letter, which was so much in accord with my feelings at the time of my change of residence. Here I am now, installed in Bordeaux these eight days and more, after a fine journey, which was surely protected by God and his angels.

. . . You ask me what my impressions were on seeing the world again. I assure you, I found it as ugly as when I had left it,—even more so, I believe,—and especially in such disorder. So I had no desire to prolong my stay in it, and was in a hurry to get back to my dear cloister. As you can imagine, it gives one something of a shock, after more than two years in

solitude, to step into a railroad station. All these people who labor so hard on earth and so few of whom think of Heaven present a sad spectacle indeed! Oh, if we had as much zeal for eternal interests as they have for miserable lucre! If we worked as hard for God as they work to make a living! And yet, how incomparably inferior is the one object to the other

We get another glimpse of her ardent piety in the following wishes sent to her sister Yvonne:—

Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Apoc.).

My wish for you, my dear little sister, is that you may listen every instant to this voice of the Divine Master and respond to it with perfect fidelity.

If anyone shall open to me the gate, I shall enter into his house (*ibid.*). To have Jesus is all one's joy. I wish you this supreme happiness, looking forward, however, to the time when it will be still more genuine and you will be carrying on your heart the image of the Heart of the Well-Beloved, who is ours as we are his and who takes his rest among the lilies.

Yet, apparently, her stay at Bordeaux was to be only a trial of her virtue, for a very short time after her arrival she received an order to repair to Le Mans. We can imagine the joy with which she sent the news to her family.

Bordeaux, February 15, 1898.

. . . I too am breaking the lenten silence to send you a piece of news which I believe will

> give you much pleasure. On Thursday I leave for Le Mans, and we shall not be separated by more than a three hours' journey. You will agree with me that our Lord is good to us and that all his designs are adorable, even when they do not seem to answer our desires.—You will now, I am sure, not resist the impulse to come and embrace your child, from whom you have been so long separated.—My dear Mamma, I rejoice no less than you on account of this change. And as all hearts beat in unison in our dear Society, every one has been exclaiming, "Oh! you will see your mother!" I had not expected to leave Bordeaux so soon, where I found all that could have been desired in the way of *motherly feeling, devotedness* and *edification.* But our Lord is everywhere, and all that I love or admire in his creatures is but a reflection from his infinite perfections.

Marie de l'Agnus Dei found at Le Mans the superior under whom she had made her retreat of probation. A religious of great virtue, of remarkable intelligence, and possessing a firmness which was only equaled by her kindness of heart, she was the first to make the acquaintance of Marie-Anne, the first to divine her merits, and perhaps also to ask her of God for the Society of Marie-Réparatrice, but at all events, the first to sound her praises to the Provincial and the General. She now saw Marie de l'Agnus Dei after two years and more of religious life and after the report of her sanctity had already preceded her from Toulouse. Now, although the reputation of the young religious was doubtless a source of satisfaction to her new superior, it gave her at the same time no little concern, as she had some apprehension of find-

ing in her new subject traces of that self-love which she feared above all things else. In point of fact, she found her a humble little religious, who was quite willing to have her will subdued under the yoke of obedience and who had brought with her an intense desire of suffering and self-immolation. Marie de l'Agnus Dei had kept the secret of what had passed within her soul at the time of her vows. Her mistress of novices was the only one who was aware of it. But she wished now to open her heart to a superior of such acknowledged excellence, to whom, besides, she felt particularly attached. No doubt, Mother Marie de X was at heart more than delighted to find such generous dispositions in her new subject and thanked God for giving her no less than she expected; nevertheless, she made up her mind to put to the test the reality of what she perceived. She wished to be sure of her own ground and at the same time to guard Marie de l'Agnus Dei from all danger of illusion; and so it came to pass that it was under the government of one who held her in the highest esteem and loved her tenderly that Marie-Anne had most to suffer, whilst, on the other hand, it was under her firm and wise direction that she took the one decisive step in the way of sanctity.

Providence, meanwhile, was bringing to pass what seemed to be a justification of the superior; for the young religious had hardly more than arrived at Le Mans when the hopes entertained of her,—hopes in some degree human,—began to vanish, and her health took a turn for the worse which made her incapable of rendering any important services to the community. During those eighteen months of martyrdom, interior and exterior, God deprived her by degrees of all the external gifts she

had hitherto possessed: her voice, which she had wished to utilize in speaking of Him,—her pen, which her fingers could no longer guide across the page,—her physical activity, which succumbed to a peculiar weakness of the limbs.

Let us not be astonished at what seems to be the extreme rigor of this trial which came to pass by God's particular providence. It should be borne in mind that the religious life is not what it is commonly thought to be. The life of a religious is the most perfect possible imitation of the life of Christ, which was one of poverty, suffering and humiliation. The work of a religious is not accomplished, once and for all, when he has severed himself from his family, or when he has parted with his temporal belongings, or when he has committed himself to a rule more or less austere. In doing this he has simply laid the foundation absolutely needed for another work, to wit, the despoiling of self. Giving up the world is praiseworthy; giving up one's family, even more so; but giving up oneself and sacrificing one's own judgment and one's own likings—that is a form of renunciation realized by few, even within convent walls; and it cannot be realized save through the medium of special trials. Yet it is the one road leading to sanctity, as the lives of the Saints make plain. Compared with this, all other sacrifices cost little or nothing, and hence it is achieved by few, even among the best. How few, indeed, have any real grasp of the idea, or seem to realize that in order to rise *above* self, which is the one way of getting rid of self, one must follow in the footsteps of Him who by an incomparable act of humility descended from Heaven in order to show us the way thither. It is all but a commonplace that those who consecrate themselves to the

work of perfection will have to suffer; so much so that astonishment is felt when even in the world good Christians are found who have had no trials. But it is forgotten, perhaps more or less ignored, that humiliation is necessary, nay even more necessary than other forms of suffering, for one's sanctification. Our Divine Lord placed certain limits to his physical sufferings, but none to his humiliations. One may, in a certain degree, get used to physical pain; and the sufferer is often soothed, or even relieved, by the compassion of others; but what shall we say of being contemned? Though a chastisement and a remedy for man's inherited pride, it is repelled by us with all the force of our nature, and we never convince ourselves that if Heaven is our goal we shall never reach it till we have learned humility. It is different with those who have a true grasp of the idea of the religious life, a life supernatural and even divine, which grows and develops in proportion to the diminution, joyfully consented to, of our self-will. This hard-wrought transformation effected by Providence in submissive souls, by means of trials often so persistent as to seem cruel, is frequently helped along by the enlightened intelligence of directors of souls. Mother Marie de X knew that the young religious under her direction had had high aspirations and had consequently but one path to follow. Holily wise in a supernatural point of view, the Mother was also supported by purely human opinion. By God's permission it so happened that all the physicians consulted on the symptoms shown by the poor child agreed in one verdict: she was a neurotic! Supposing she was such, the Superior was in strict duty bound to act with firmness, as indeed she was counseled to do. In the hypothesis of a nervous disorder it was the best course

to follow; and who could refuse to credit the hypothesis when it was affirmed by all the physicians? Ah! but then, what was to be thought of a religious who was so little accustomed to overcome herself as not only to fail to execute the orders she received but to do poorly the little she did at all? Was this the outcome of so much intelligence, of such generous piety, of such elevated views? Was this what they were to expect from one who had edified the novitiate for two years? . . . Poor child! however much charity was shown her,—and the community was profuse in its charity,—she could not help perceiving the atmosphere of surprise and censure in which she moved. She had known what it was to be admired, and now in the same degree she tasted of humiliation. So painful was the trial that she felt as if her moral as well as her physical forces had reached their limit. So painful was it that she could never have had an inkling of what was in store for her, and if she had had, even *her* courage might not have been equal to accepting it.

Her Superior was no less prudent and motherly than she was firm in dealing with her, and she neglected nothing that might contribute to her cure. The best doctors were summoned and she was allowed modes of treatment that were costly and difficult of application in a religious house. Superiors were bent upon getting at the real truth about the matter, and at any cost. But God did not will that the real truth should come out then, or at Le Mans. This was her period of trial, and indeed her tribulations had begun almost upon her arrival in the house. She had been assigned to the post of subsacristan. Here was an occupation in which she delighted, and yet it brought her some keen humiliations. All of

a sudden and without any apparent cause, an object would fall from her hand. As she had always been told that she was awkward,—a defect of her infancy which must have been due to some physical cause, as was acknowledged later on,—she would humbly go and accuse herself to the Mother Superior and return to her work. At other times she would stumble without having met with any obstacle, or would even fall to the ground, saying afterwards that she had felt her limbs give way beneath her, though she knew not why. These little incidents, comparatively rare at first, were attributed to a natural awkwardness of movement, though this mode of accounting for them was the less admissible as she continued to paint and draw with considerable delicacy and firmness of touch. But a defect which could not be explained at all was that which appeared in her speech. At first, there were moments, afterwards whole days, when she spoke "as if she had a sugar-plum in her mouth." This was her own way of putting it, and it was quite apt. At times her articulation failed her completely and it became very difficult to understand her. Later on she was reduced to absolute silence. Her strange infirmity hampered nearly all her actions. The doctors would have her cure herself by the exercise of will-power, and she was frequently bidden to read aloud in the refectory. There were days when she found no difficulty in reading; but at other times she would begin bravely enough and then stop, repeat a sentence which she had made unintelligible, and again repeat it with as little success, till finally Mother Superior would give her a sign to resume her place at table. She would then rise, with the greatest calm of manner, feeling her disappointment only because she was told that it was painful to her sisters to listen to her

reading. At night, when the religious were assembled for the last prayers, she had to take her turn in reading the litanies for a week. Again, she was often obliged to stop, her face all flushed from the superhuman efforts she was making rather than from the confusion caused her. Yet, at times, her recitation was faultless and there was not the smallest hesitation; but then, of course, the general impression about her was confirmed: "You see, she is a neurotic."

An experiment was made in giving her a little catechism to teach to some girls in one of the parlors. She took up the work gladly and was delighted to have a chance of speaking about God to these young souls; but inside of a quarter of an hour her vocal organs became embarrassed and she could not shape her words. Singing was the next thing she was obliged to abandon, and her voice, once so much prized by the music mistress at Toulouse, was henceforth useless at any exercise in the chapel. Indeed it was never to be heard more except amid angelic choirs. At last her superiors had to resign themselves to employing her in a task which had always been peculiarly hers, that of making abstracts of spiritual conferences and instructions and of drawing up other documents which are preserved in religious houses. At first, the task was easy and was done with the intelligence required, but before long her hands were seized with a torpor which made it impossible for her to press her fingers against the pen, with the result that she could not jot down with sufficient rapidity the notes she was afterwards to put into connected form. Hence, in this task also she had to be helped; for she was never more than helped; indeed so long as she was at Le Mans, and although towards the end of her stay she was very

infirm, she was never entirely relieved of the offices which she discharged so poorly. Work left unfinished was finished for her and work done imperfectly was done over again,—so that every day she had a fresh sense of her uselessness. What she suffered in consequence is revealed by her notes. We shall give some extracts from them, though the original is so badly penned as to be almost illegible. They will give us an idea of all that is involved in self-sanctification and in the preparing of oneself to repair, in union with Jesus crucified, the crimes of the world. They will above all show us the ineffable marks of tenderness bestowed upon his child by the God who was treating her with such rigor because of his special affection for her. She had little more than reached Le Mans when she wrote as follows:—

May 19, 1898.

Last evening I felt so discouraged . . . at the visit I noticed a book and opened it—why? It was an office-book, and I read: *"You who have followed Me shall be seated on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel."* O Jesus, it was too much! . . . That is my support still. . . . Thanks! thanks! my Jesus.

May 20.

. . . Jesus, happy those who hear You and who know the sound of your voice! . . . You have often bade me of late, "Be a saint!" And can I? And is the dream of my childhood to be a reality? Why should this dream visit my heart if my life is to be mediocre?

. . . O Jesus, I want to be a saint, and I am glad at having felt since morning this coldness and tedium, for through this must I pass. . . .

Open to me your Heart, or rather purify mine, and come and repose in it.

May 26.

O Heart of Jesus, I am cold, insensible, lifeless. . . . Love of You is not strong enough in me! Give me that something that draws one perforce! Give me the sacred fire . . . inflame my zeal . . . enable me to see . . . or rather, my God, may your will be done. . . . Continue this work of annihilation . . . let the seed rot in the soil . . . it will then be multiplied.

. . . Everything comes to us from God . . . even our nerves? And Jesus, answering my thought, said to me with tenderness: "As long as you struggle and suffer and think you are accomplishing nothing, I take account of your efforts—nothing is lost. . . ." Oh! how these words consoled me! I suffer so much from these poor rebellious nerves of mine, which my efforts only agitate the more! How good God is! His will is my sanctification. . . . Let me be more alive to this, and at once I shall be enriched by every creature that touches me. . . . Mary, my good Mother, make me grasp this practically. Everything can, everything ought, to be a help . . . even my voice, which may never be of any service in the external apostolate. . . . I must turn to leading an interior life, thus by my prayers and my generosity giving my Lord what I cannot give Him by my work. . . . If God makes it clear that it is his will, I shall be a purely contemplative Réparatrice.—That is not our real vocation, it is true; but it may be God's will in a particular case. Why in mine? This question I shall not ask. . . . At all events I shall suffer much from my helplessness.

It means, to begin with, the sacrifice of my dear missions . . . unable even to teach the catechism! O my God, what a happiness it is to have something to suffer for You. How I should fling myself into sacrifice, abnegation, purity of heart, humility. Saint Teresa converted as many souls as Saint Francis Xavier. *Ecce ancilla Domini!*[1]

. . . Our Lord is hearing my prayer. . . . Good humiliations. This morning I saw Père X, and as happens with every one to whom I manifest my interior a little, the one thing he said was, "O my poor child!" It seems as if my soul were an object of profound astonishment to those who get a glimpse of it, as though they had never seen anything so desolate or so sad. I acknowledge I have felt deeply humiliated, and that it is difficult to struggle against the sadness that comes upon me. And yet what a grace it is! It is just this that rids me of self, and our Lord comes and tells me out of his great Heart: "My poor child, you have nothing left, and behold, I am here to give you Myself." My Lord Jesus, humble your little servant still more. Continue your work; always touch some sensitive part of my being; and then come, You alone, and be glorified in me.

The workman is nothing, the work is everything. I am nothing, reparation is everything.

I must be simple, amiable, devoted, active, cheerful. I believe I have thus far made a mistake in seeking humility for humility's sake; for it has made me turn too much to myself; and I am often saddened to see evidence of my still being very much taken up with myself.

[1] Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Now, O my Jesus, I see better the way of going out of myself and becoming united with You. It is by devotedness to something not myself. . . . And so we shall work together for this end. First, through humility, and in order to edify we shall reform the exterior; and I shall become simple, acting without more ado and without any thought of changing, once things have been decided. I shall look at You and endeavor to act like You. Amiability, devotedness—may this be the fruit of the triduum.

Amiability, O my Jesus, like yours, like Mary's, like Saint Agnes's, like Saint John Berchmans'. Amiability proceeding from love and a virtuous motive, amiability towards all and always. Taking thought for others . . . practical devotedness; and of a kind that is cheerful, practical, broad, strong,—that comes from God and goes to God, that broadens the soul, whilst brightening the lives of one's fellowmen. Devotion to others should make up my life. Not to possess it and yet be a Réparatrice —that is unintelligible.

My dear Jesus, I mean to change. But to fancy that by to-morrow morning I shall be the perfection of amiability and devotedness—oh! that is out of the question. . . . It must come gradually. Often enough I shall find I am occupied with myself. Often, too, I may let slip an opportunity of rendering a service. Frequently, perhaps, I shall shirk disagreeable tasks. All this I must forecast, in order to avoid discouragement. But to keep pressing forward, to return promptly to You and to duty, to be quick in recovering lost ground after each failure is recognized and repented for,—this is what I

propose to do with your grace. It is difficult, yes, my dear Jesus, it is difficult. . . . I have not acquired the habit of amiability. My heart is too small, too narrow, too much shut up in itself. Now, first of all, *O Domine, ut videam.*[1] That I may see the occasion, look for it, anticipate it. This is mostly your work, Jesus, the effect of your grace, to be obtained by prayer. My part will then be to act. No weakness—courage! Seeing *You* and crying out that I love You, and doing so more earnestly than nature cries for pity . . . then strenuous action . . . this I shall often pray for, and my crucifix of the vows will remind me of it. Striving to do all things well, urging myself forward, crying out to You when I feel I am sinking . . . mortification, no less. I can do much more than I imagine. Oh, preserve me from overtenderness and pity for poor self!

Self-sacrifice and devotion to others, sustained by energy, will lead directly to joy, expansion, largeness of heart.

Our Lord is doing his work in me. He is detaching me from all else, that He may unite me with Himself. Gradually all earthly ties are severing, and I am drawing near—dare I say it?—to pure love. How can I presume to say as much when self-love is so strong? But there will be a change. To-night and to-morrow at dawn, a new life begins. It is to be a life of joy—our Lord will have it such. He is in every way impelling me to joy. So, then, away with *self* and with all *return to self!* Away with all *regrets,* with all sadness! "Nothing henceforth but Jesus! for with Him nothing is want-

[1] O Lord, that I may see!

ing and the heart is filled to overflowing with happiness." O my Jesus, how I would fain love You! Large as the world! Large like Yourself!

. . . Two days without communion! I am dying of hunger. But what a delight to think that He is coming! Mary, watch over each pulsation of my heart this night. Bread of angels! Milk of sucklings! Honey from the rock! O Jesus, made a victim for your poor little slave, would I could receive You this very evening into my heart! But to-morrow!

. . . During vespers I was struck by the magnificent promises of the 110th psalm.[1] And why all that? *Quoniam speravit in Me.*[2] Does all, then, O my God, depend on confidence?—Yes, my child, the more you hope in me the more you will obtain.—O my God, I hope with your grace to become very humble and to procure You great glory.

. . . Our Lord, by remaining in the Temple, occasioned Mary the greatest possible suffering. —"Son, why hast Thou done so to us?"—"My dear Mother, it was precisely because I knew your heart." And I: "Jesus, why do you act thus towards me?"—"O my child, because it is this that you have asked of Me." Let us not play false with our Lord, however sincere our desire. Lord, do not trust me: You know my real worth.

. . . God alone—that is everything. We are continually saying: "God alone! God alone!" And yet nothing really comes of it.—Suffering is a treasure; and hence if we are logical we

[1] 90th?
[2] Because he hath hoped in Me.

should try and render ourselves capable of suffering.

Self-devoting charity, always ready to render service, even to the death, and to the death on the cross. One must learn to endure discomfort in rendering service.

Marie de l'Agnus Dei, whilst at Le Mans, was enabled to see her mother the more frequently as three of the children were away from home, her two brothers at the Collège de Sainte-Croix and Françoise at the Sacred Heart. Hence she wrote scarcely any letters except to send news about herself or when her family was at Le Patys. In the family circle no anxiety was felt about her health, for there, as elsewhere, the belief was entertained that her trouble was seated in the nervous system and was caused by a complete change of life affecting a very young constitution, which, however, would by degrees outgrow its ailings. Superiors were asked to make her life as active and her treatment as bracing as possible. When she had a visit from home, she had herself so well in hand and chatted so gayly that her visitors forgot all about her sufferings. These she carefully concealed from her relatives, who became informed of them only through others. She felt a warm interest in all the events, great or small, of the home-circle. At Easter she wrote:—

Le Mans, April 10, 1898.

May our Lord give you a large share in the joys of His Resurrection! What a happiness to think that whilst we are toiling and moiling on earth, our Divine Master at least is glorious

and triumphant! Do you not find it restful to the soul to think that Jesus is at rest?—The thought of the immense joy of our Lord makes us sink into insignificance and become lost in the triumph of our God. But I am forgetting that *you* have made your meditation as well as I, and that all this has been already brought home to you. However, it will perhaps bear some repetition.

I am happy to think of you at Le Patys, the land of dear memories, the home of peace and of true joy. I hope you will have good weather during the whole of your stay. I fancy I see you on the road to Marans, wending your way to the Easter services, and in the finest attire, as one must be on such occasions; and I think of the church, which seldom or never changes in point of decorations,—with its golden flowers and its gala candelabra on the altar. Here we have the truest of Easter altars, with its palms and its lilies and its roses, like that which the garden of Joseph of Arimathea must have been on the morning of the Resurrection; only we have wax-lights instead of the brightness shed by the angels at the tomb about them. With that all would be complete. What a joy prevails since morning and after the deep silence and the sad offices of Holy Week.

She then adds:—

Don't worry about my teeth or about my voice. My teeth must come out when they are incurable, and my voice will come back when—the good God pleases. I never felt as well as at present.

Le Mans, June 19, 1898.

I am at present very busy. I cannot lose a quarter of a minute without its being felt. I am continually in the linen-room with a Mother who is much distracted by another charge and with a sister who has just fallen ill. On feast-days I go to the sacristy to occupy my spare time. I am very happy with things as they are (as I always am, thank God). It is a real blessing to have no time to be occupied with oneself at all; and that is our case nearly always. God and souls! What a horizon, and what an occupation for so short a life as ours!

A Dieu, my dearest Mamma. All is going well. My teeth are behaving nicely. Tell the good God that if He would be pleased to restore my voice, if it be to his glory, I should be no less content.

To her Sister Yvonne:

Le Mans, July 30, 1899.

. . . What shall I say to you, sister dear, but what you hear repeated so often on all sides: Confidence, courage! The time of expectation and delay will have an end, but the pure and sweet joy you will feel will have none, for it will issue in the eternal and ineffable joys of Heaven.—Oh, you must often thank our Lord for the inestimable gift of your vocation! It will be the source of a multitude of graces and provide you with the greatest facility for drawing close to our Lord.

We are the privileged children of his Heart. He has chosen us from eternity, and during His mortal life, when He was our Emmanuel, our Jesus capable of suffering, who shall say how

> many prayers, how many afflictions, how many tears, He offered up to His Father to obtain for us the blessed vocation which He held so dear? Let it be ours to pay Him the debt we owe Him. He is giving you some excellent occasions for proving your love and your spirit of submission; for He has sent you a trial so very contrary to your inclinations in keeping you waiting so long for the happiness which you crave. Try to profit by this precious time, which is a first and fruitful novitiate, and its advantages you will one day recognize. Happier than many others, you will enter the religious life after a very real and serious preparation. You have our dear mother with you, who can help you much. When I entered the novitiate, younger and less tried by delay than you, the Mothers there told me more than once that I was happy in having had *Mamma,* whose life was made up of so many divine gifts, and who helped me to understand what a serious and holy life meant. This is not every one's privilege. . . .

Her sister's entrance into religion, which for grave reasons was postponed for a time, and her vocation itself, were surely the fruit of the prayers and sacrifices of Marie de l'Agnus Dei. It was her fond idea to see her sister a Réparatrice; and when she felt her own health declining, her thought was that Yvonne would take her place and render the Society the services which she no longer hoped to render herself,—that she would take up the work she had left undone, when the sacrifice should be consummated. She was right in her forecast and saw further than others, for she died only a very short time after her sister had entered the novitiate. God accepted her

offering and took to Himself, though in different ways, the two sisters at the same time.

> . . . How I do pray for you, now that we are *sisters* in more senses than one: by blood and by the ties, quite otherwise strong and tender, of a common vocation.—Be not disquieted by the vicissitudes through which you are passing in your interior life. All of it must be experienced. We must understand our misery by seeing it most clearly, and be persuaded that of ourselves we accomplish nothing of good. We must rise superior to these difficulties, with all quietness and humility, and be intent upon perfecting our ordinary actions and performing them with great purity of intention.—Courage! However long the time may seem, the blessed moment of your entrance is surely approaching. You will never purchase this happiness too dearly, because—and I speak from experience—it is not only the grace of graces but a happiness with which no other can compare. So, then, *Deo gratias!* And all for our Lord, in whom I am closely united with you.

The recurrence of All Saints' Day never failed to revive memories of her father; and these she would record in her letters, as in the following, written after the close of a retreat:—

> How good it is to be in retreat! The soul feels plunged back into its true element, which is God and heavenly things. It is a slight beginning of what we shall be doing in eternity. What a happiness to think that our dear father

has already begun his blessed eternity, that he is now occupied only with God, and that his present state will never have an end. I love to think of this and to thank God for it, whilst begging Him to reunite us with him who has been the first to leave us.—On All-Saints and the next day I shall be united with you in this thought about Heaven.

December 25, 1898.

It is the dear little Jesus that will give you from me both the joys of the Nativity and all my wishes for the New Year. Coming through Him, I can feel assured that the joys will be perfect and the wishes fulfilled. We understand one another, dear Mamma, and during this season of the year in which so many useless words are interchanged, so many worldly wishes, so many frivolous compliments, I am sure that you feel as I do the need of making reparation to the Master, who is so much forgotten in the midst of it all. Hence all our wishes will point Heavenward. Let us pass beyond the limits of this paltry world and ask both for life eternal and all that may help us to glorify God upon earth. The Master chose for Himself poverty, humiliation, suffering. In beholding his Crib, why not think as He did? Oh! if we could but think as our Lord does, and hence be able to enter fully into the divine plans. —My wish for you, my dear Mamma, is all that our Divine Master can wish for you in his infinite wisdom and love, and my prayer for you is that He may grant you the plenitude of his grace.

From time to time the Superior of Le Mans, when visits were less frequent, wrote in person a line or two to Mme. Hervé-Bazin on the subject of her daughter's health, and it was always to reassure her and to tell her, on the doctor's word, that all was going well.

Dear Madam:

There is nothing serious in the condition of your dear child; a little nervous weakness—nothing more. She has improved already. The air of Le Mans and moderate exercise are proving effective, and the use of cordials is contributing its good effect.

November 17, 1898.

Mother Marie de l'Agnus Dei is still doing well. And her voice? . . . There is no change for the better or for the worse. We must see what can be done for it.

Marie-Anne herself endeavored to reassure her mother:—

Le Mans, July 10, 1898.

Yesterday I saw the doctor again for my voice. He made me read, and it was discovered that I did not know how to breathe; but I was told that after some lessons I should be cured. So you see, there is nothing serious the matter. . . . I have had occasion to see the physician who had charge of X, for the doctor had consulted him about my throat. He discovered nothing and ordered an examination with a laryngoscope (I haven't the smallest idea of how to spell so big a word). So a third doctor was needed for my poor carcass. The examination showed nothing more than a little catarrh at the back of the throat,—that is to say, noth-

> ing at all; and again everybody concluded, "It is a nerve trouble." For my part, I felt deeply grateful for the truly maternal care that was being taken of me, and I resolved to struggle still more against these nervous tendencies, which are so annoying to every one. But the great remedy now is prayer, that, with God's help, I may not oblige so many to busy themselves with me. For the rest, I am getting on well. If Françoise found me looking weary, it is surprising, for I am always quite well.

Prayer was indeed her one real resource, for notwithstanding her assurances she was gradually becoming helpless. Her malady grew daily worse. Her voice was becoming quite nasal, and speaking was a very difficult task. She must now hold needle, brush or pen between rigid fingers, which had lost all their tenacity; but she would never abandon them. She wrote badly, sewed slowly and painted with difficulty, but she worked on all the same. What was really pitiable at this period was the weakness that would suddenly seize her limbs. Oftentimes she had to remain seated at the top of the stairs, feeling that neither legs nor arms would support her in her descent. Sometimes she took her chances and planted her foot on the stairs,—though all but certain she would fall,—and fall she often did; and meanwhile she had such severe pains in the back that these, together with the anguish caused by her efforts to descend, would force from her a sigh or a groan. At other times she would be found on her knees in one of the corridors, quite unable to rise. A like mishap would occasionally occur as she was on her way to join the community in recreation-time. Once whilst her companions were standing before

a statue of Saint Ignatius and reciting some invocations, they saw her coming towards them with her face scratched and stained. "You have had a fall?" they asked. She smiled and answered with a sign, and then quietly taking out her handkerchief said, "I thought it would leave no marks."

The more her sufferings increased the more generosity was evoked in the sufferer. The cry of distress which she sometimes sent up to Heaven was always accompanied by a cry of love. Both have left their marks in the following notes, from which the reader may easily gather how perfectly God's work was being accomplished in this crucified soul.

March 4.

How many things I ask of you, O Saint Francis Xavier. Look down upon this poor earth of ours; constrain, as it were, the good God to look with favor upon us, and let us save souls so dear to us. O dear Saint, set me on fire! The Holy Father, the missions, the Society in its trials, my sisters in religion, men's souls, the world,—I feel for all these in every heart-beat.—O Saint most amiable and filled with charity, give me a heart like yours. *Amplius!*[1]

By vocation, I am an apostolic soul, because I am a soul given, surrendered, consecrated, to God. Thus every pulsation of my heart affects souls in some way. If I am on fire, they are warmed; if I am lukewarm, they languish; if I am cold, they die, far from God. What a

[1] The *"amplius, Domine"* of Saint Francis Xavier, imploring that God might send him *even more* suffering and toil than he knew by revelation would be his portion in the Indies.

well-spring of zeal is in this thought, O my Jesus! Set my heart on fire!

. . . The day of Judas's treachery! The day, no less, of Magdalen's sweet unguents. Is she not a Réparatrice? The ointment which she pours upon the head of Jesus, is it not much more a balm for His deeply wounded Heart? O my poor heart, we must be a sweet-smelling balm to our Lord. The spikenard is a very little flower, but resembling the lily in form. Like the lily, it is white, its fragrance is at once sweet and penetrating, and its blossoms are gathered closely about a firm-set stem. Let us keep but one end in view, my heart, and have but one center. The spikenard does not yield its perfume till it is crushed. . . . You complain, poor heart, in the winepress and beneath the feet of those who tread it. Listen to the word, the divine word, that shall reveal to you whose work this is: "I have trodden the wine-press *alone!*" Do not, then, charge your sufferings upon creatures. Look and see! . . . The vesture of the Beloved is bright as scarlet, but it is fragrant as the spikenard. . . . This fragrance, my heart, is yourself!

Good Friday, March 31.

Vivo! . . . jam non ego: vivit in me Jesus Crucifixus![1] This is the pattern, Agnus Dei; it is thus we are to repair, thus to live, thus to die. In life or in death, it is my crucifix and I! *Quid retribuam?*

April 2.—Easter.

Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus, Alleluia![2] . . . *Immolatus! Alleluia!* Oh! may

[1] I live; now, not: Jesus crucified liveth in me.
[2] Christ our Pasch is immolated, alleluia!

the grace of this day be to understand how these two words are related!

In You, O Lord, shall I rejoice; I shall exult in the shadow of your wings. My soul will leap for joy. I shall sound your praises on the lyre. Your joy shall be mine. My peace shall be in my bitterness, however intense, and in the glory of my Lord.

April 13.

Immolatus! Alleluia!

Shall I dare say I suffer too much? No, I will not say so—I will not think so.—Have You well enough succeeded in despoiling me of all support, in depriving me of all comfort? The work is in skillful hands. So labor on! chisel, file, pulverize. May a masterpiece be the result. But I lose faith in this masterpiece; and this increases my pain a hundredfold. Oh! I am so perverse!

May 25.

Oh, to die, but not to be proceeding at this pace! That will never do. How often have You not sought to draw me onward by your grace when I was impeding its action. Yes, I should know myself better.

I have now no resource left. Nothing vibrates in my moral or in my physical being. I am nerveless, devoid of ardor. O Jesus . . . no, others cannot carry my cross. In vain should I lay it upon their shoulders: it would still remain upon my own, and be all the heavier. . . . O Jesus, I am crushed utterly; yes to the center of my being.

. . . O Jesus, if with that I must have a disease of the nerves, how would You have me live? Mary, come to my aid!

Courage! courage! Others have passed through as much and have come forth from it. My God, You can do all things, and You love me. . . . Ah, my strength is gone, my strength is gone . . . my head suffers so much. . . . Oh! make me live by the heart and not by the head!

May 30.

I am now feeling calmed . . . and what a blessing! If I could always be quiet, simple! It would be almost a miracle, now especially when my poor over-excited nerves make themselves so much felt? But God can work miracles. He has created me, redeemed me—can He not calm me? O my God, let me serve You or die; but to live for myself as I have been doing—that never more. I feel as if I had no strength to live. All is difficult. I assure You, my good Master, my force is spent; my soul is bruised; and yet for You, my dear Jesus, what may not one be capable of doing? If it is your pleasure I will keep on my way, nerve-racked, desolate, pained, weak, spiritless, wearied, depressed, yet carrying my cross in spite of all, with You as my Cyrenean. Others suffer more than I. . . . You above all! . . . Yet the truth is that I feel as if, one by one, all my supports were being removed from me. I fall, whichever side I turn to. It is because I have not the courage to support myself upon your cross. O Jesus, I derive little or no support from creatures, and none at all when You are not present. They wound me, they are as thorns from which I am repelled. O Master, I am not just! I know not how to acknowledge benefits!

I will forget myself in order to think only of the interests of Jesus—that is the one thing necessary, to think of Jesus. All for Jesus!

An Act of Oblation

O Jesus, my Love, I, thy insignificant servant, offer and dedicate myself to Thee wholly and entirely, resigning all my interests in favor of thine, and casting upon Thee all my cares and all thought regarding myself, in order to serve no interests but thine and to have henceforth neither thoughts nor desires save those concerning Thee and thy divine will. In making this oblation, the chief end I have in view is the salvation of souls, that those who do not know Thee may attain to a knowledge of our holy Faith, and that those that know Thee may be restored to thy grace or advance still further in love of Thee. I beg Thee, O Jesus, to accept this poor offering (which will be of no value except through Thee) at the hands of thy most holy Mother, and to grant me through her intercession, the pardon of my sins and an abundance of grace whereby in the future I may be a useful instrument in promoting thy glory.

Made on the Feast of our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the Vigil of the Feast of the Body of Our Lord, the 31st of May, 1899.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

. . . Oh! if poor worldlings could have but a taste of our happiness, which is so pure, so deep, so indescribable! My dear Jesus, bring back to You those poor hearts that have gone astray,—hearts of virgins, it may be, who might be your spouses if they so willed.

. . . Jesus, is your overflowing grace to be for us alone? Oh! during these days which are steeped in grace, what willing response You would receive. O my God! . . . You know I am entirely yours, for the souls of men.

O Mary, have my heart in your keeping,—this heart which Jesus has been purifying. In my hands it would be ruined. Hide it for me and make use of it for Him alone.

. . . My God, I thank You, and I love You as much as You are great, through the Heart of your well-beloved Son Jesus, the Victim within me.

The 27th of June, 1899, brought to her anniversaries dear to her heart.

Ecce, sto ad ostium et pulso.[1] It is now eight years, my Beloved, since You knocked at my door. . . . Oh! what a blessing for me that I opened unto You. If I could have vowed to be yours ten years sooner, I should wish to have done so, and if I had not thus vowed before to-day, I should do so at this moment.

O Jesus, finish your work. The vow is not enough, for it must be fulfilled. You are still present and are still knocking. Shall my heart be more insensible now, less inclined to open? Enter, Lord Jesus, and banish all else, especially myself. All for You, Jesus!

August 2.

O Jesus, how I desire to die! How I long to die! But, as to live is to cover myself with dust, how can You have me desire to live?

[1] Behold, I stand at the door and knock.—*Apoc.*

O Jesus, take me before the flame of my enthusiasm is extinguished, before my affections are staled, before this all-engulfing life has touched me, before I have heaped offense upon offense, before I have too much saddened You.

O my Jesus, may your will be done. *Non recuso laborem.*[1]

August 11.

Holocaust . . . victim. . . . Oh! how hard it is in practice! Jesus, have pity! pity! . . . pity! Help me, that I may give with joy.

My God, I had rather perish by a fall, if it be your will, than enjoy perfect health apart from your willing it.

In summing up a meditation on indifference in the use of creatures, her note runs as follows:—

A religious held in great regard . . . she can accomplish much, she is useful and is appreciated, she renders great services.

An infirm religious . . . good for few things . . . is scarcely able to follow the rule . . . has little to interest . . . is made small account of . . . people are used to seeing her suffer.

A religious strong and strenuous, always charged with one thing or other . . . able to spend herself, to devote herself, to do much and be ready to do more.

A religious sick and helpless . . . obliged continually to summon all her courage even to plant her foot upon the ground, doing nothing without untold suffering, seeing where others need to be helped without being able to assist

[1] I decline not the labor and trouble.—*St. Martin of Tours.*

them,—seeing that time is passing and she can only employ it in suffering. . . . O my God! . . .

My child, your lot is a blessed one: this is the royal road, that of the holy cross. Indifference does not even exist in the presence of such advantages. Pain, impotence, contempt—this is the way leading to life eternal. . . . There is no better purgatory than sickness. A single moment will yield an immense deal of glory. The glory of a father consists in the virtues of his child.

I wish to glorify my Father who is in Heaven, by my sleepless nights, by my sufferings. . . . All that is created has slipped away from me. Confidence in God! . . . Glory to God! I am content. I am the more detached from the world and hope the more for eternal goods. The Hebrews wept upon the margin of the river of Babylon—ah! there my tongue is tied! . . . I shall hang up my harp and sing no more of things of earth: I can still sing the glory of God!

. . . O my Divine Jesus, I place at your feet all my fears and repugnances. If it be your wish that I serve You by my helplessness, it is my wish also; if it is by being despised, it is my wish also; if by sickness, it is my wish also; if by pain endured, it is my wish also. It is my wish because it is my end to glorify You, and your glory is all my joy and my heart's pleasure. It is in this disposition henceforth and not in my own repose that I would place my happiness. Give to my will, O Jesus, such vigor as will rid me more of self and enable me to go forward even unto death beneath the cross. Amen.

. . . God loves one who gives joyfully and who in giving all thinks he has given nothing. All is summed up in these two words: *Crucifixus! alleluia!*

I had rather, O my God, suffer all my life in religion than enjoy a life in the world. I prefer a million times pain here to joy elsewhere.

I had rather die ten thousand times than listen to a temptation against my vocation.

If I knew I were one day to quit your service, I would implore You to send my death whilst I am writing these words.

And this protestation I should write, if need be, with my blood, or in letters of fire upon my body.

Give me the grace, O my God, to write it by suffering accepted throughout my life. . . . It is not a reputation for sanctity that makes the saint: it is the will to suffer much for Jesus.

. . . It is God's will for the earth that men should suffer. The higher gifts are given only to enable us to suffer the better. Here below, enjoyment is never the end.

My life, such as it will be henceforth if I am not cured, is to be a succession of humiliations and sufferings.—*Deo gratias!* and I say it heartily!

But it is hard. In the fervor of prayer one is ready for anything: how often the heart grows faint when the cross actually appears. . . . In my case, there is but little love. If I loved Jesus more and better, I should have much more courage. *Da mihi tuum amorem et gratiam.*[1]

Jesus, You are a Master in the art of crucify-

[1] Give me thy love and thy grace.—*St. Ignatius' Sp. Ex.*

ing. What return shall I make You for the care You take to make me resemble You? Love for love!

To suffer, to love, to be despised! Is it so formidable, so unacceptable? . . . My child, I did not fear it for Myself. My Father set joy before Me and I chose the cross and embraced contempt. You have done the same thing in coming here. A generous movement like yours, will it be the beginning of a thousand acts of cowardice? O my child, you might console my Heart so much!

Jesus, I want to give You all, but You know how often my poor weakling of a will is cowardly, tortuous, deluded about itself. Oh! transform it! . . .

. . . *Jesus autem tacebat.*[1] *Tacere!* Silence! Not only exteriorly, for that is not difficult, but interiorly. Yes, I believe I submit, I wish it to be so. . . . All that is true. . . . Silence like that of my Divine Jesus. *Tacebat!* No more complaints, no more tears, no more excuses. Create a calm in the heart and in the midst of it look at Jesus and say to yourself, "All is to the good." God wills that I be humiliated. He is sending me an antidote for my pride. All that I had reckoned upon has failed me. Well and good. Nature revolts: Jesus appears: *Mecum!* In Me is all strength: come and draw from this source. Confidence, courage!

. . . Contempt of self should have to do with my sufferings, my repose, my present difficulties, my fears for the future, the desire of esteem, those petty confusions occasioned by my physi-

[1] But Jesus held his peace.

cal condition, by my faults, my defects. Sink all in the thought of Jesus. . . . Seek the love of Jesus in meditation and prayer, in devotedness, sacrifice, suffering loved, abnegation, mortification.

. . . Jesus crucified, I make to You the sacrifice of my life, as I feel my strength diminishing and it seems to me that You wish to take me. Intending in this to do nothing for which I would need more ample permission, and submissive in all to your good pleasure and the wishes of my superiors, I wish to die in union with your holy death and that of your immaculate Mother, for the Society, for the work of reparation, for priests, for my family.

I place myself beneath your hand, my dear Lord, that You may begin or continue the work of destroying my body, to which I submit in expiation of my sins and in a spirit of reparation. I die in union with You.

AGNUS DEI, S. M. R.

Le Mans, September 3, 1899.

O Lord, accept here the humble homage of my thanksgiving for the strength which I find in prayer.

When everything in me refuses its service, when my limbs tremble and my hands grow rigid, grant that instead of being troubled I may pray.

When I am abased, humbled, set aside, grant that instead of being saddened I may pray.

When I tremble for my blessed vocation, grant that instead of fearing I may pray.

When I feel myself crushed, overwhelmed,

completely undone, grant that instead of being discouraged I may pray.

May I pray by day, pray by night, in strength and in weakness, in joy and amid tears.

My crucified God, I say to You my *Suscipe*.[1] Give me the grace never again to unsay it.

I offer up to You all my being—all! . . .

I want no longer to think of myself. I wish to live a vigorous life, supported by your Divine Heart.

Holy communion will be my strength, through faith.

I will hold my peace before others. I will complain no more, but rather give thanks.

Keep me in your house, and that will be enough.

O Jesus, how happy I am to suffer and to be humiliated! A hundred times more happy than before, because I realize the truth about myself.

Open to me your Heart, that I may draw from it a courage that fails not.

. . . Heaven! And so soon! . . . My soul, take comfort! This exile is very short, and what shall I say of the recompense? Your heavenly country is fairer than you can imagine. There, nothing will ever hinder or trouble or sadden you. You will never be concerned for the future, nor taste of any bitterness in the present. There you will be rid of sin and of the germs of all the vices. There you will move in light incomparable, amidst the harmonies of celestial choirs, in the society of the saints and the angels, and of Mary and of Jesus!

[1] Take, O Lord, etc.—*Prayer of St. Ignatius.*

Chapter II

Despite her own courageous efforts, the hopes and wishes of her superiors, and even the repeated assurances of the physicians, it was becoming evident that the illness of Marie de l'Agnus Dei had reached a serious stage and that her life was wasting away. The somewhat rude climate of Le Mans was little suited to her condition, and the approaching winter would doubtless aggravate her troubles. Mother Marie de ———, unwilling to expose her child to new sufferings, asked for her a change of residence which would afford her better protection from the cold.

Her request was well received and Marie de l'Agnus Dei was sent to Bordeaux in September, 1899. Even before going she had had some days of severe suffering, but the journey itself exhausted her completely; so much so that she arrived at her new abode more dead than alive. She was incapable of motion and was little more than conscious. She was so much changed in appearance that her new superior, after placing her in bed and returning to the community, exclaimed, "Why, they have sent us one who is dying." Dying, no, not as yet: she had other afflictions to undergo, other sacrifices to make, and her hour had not yet come. After these first days of exhaustion she rallied a little, and this was due to several causes.—When she arrived in Bordeaux she was supposed to be of a neurotic disposition but at the same time really quite ill, and the impression she made upon her new

superior was such as to make her realize the condition of her patient. The Superior was kindness itself, and she had as Assistant a young religious who had been Under-Mistress of Novices at Toulouse during Marie-Anne's stay there. Knowing her so long, she received her with a tenderness and compassion which cheered the heart of the sufferer. At Bordeaux also, Marie-Anne found the Reverend Père de ———, who when residing at Toulouse had given her the habit, had received her vows and had been the recipient of her spiritual confidences during her novitiate. We can imagine the help and support she received from both friends. Now, too, under God's providence, the Superior adopted a course of treatment entirely different from that followed at Le Mans. She prescribed a rest; little or nothing was given her to do; and she was bid not to attempt to walk without assistance when feeling too weak. A rest! That was just the one thing needful to the poor sufferer. And indeed she could not help taking it with the greatest zest. The mildness of the climate, the affectionate compassion shown her,—though the belief was still entertained that her trouble was fundamentally neurotic—besides the treatment accorded her by the community doctor, a man of mild and sympathetic disposition,—all this contributed to secure for Marie de l'Agnus Dei some months of life. We shall now listen to her own account of it all, in a letter to her family.

Bordeaux, September 10, 1899.

. . . Here I am in this dear house of Bordeaux, and the Reverend Mother Superior has bid me write to you immediately, in order to save you from any prolonged anxiety regarding

the journey. Thanks be to God, all has gone well. I had as companion a young Mother on her way to Toulouse. The two little religious felt lost in the crowd; and what strangers we were to a world which is so excited about nothing and makes so great a hubbub about trifles. The Reverend Père X has been saying to me that if we lived in the midst of this turmoil, as the Fathers are often obliged to do, I should understand better how necessary is our work of reparation. How sad it is to see so many people losing their time and their eternity.—But I am not supposed to be writing you a discourse upon the world's woes. You know them better than I and deplore them no less.

The house at Bordeaux is a pleasant one, indeed. The garden, which I had never seen except in winter, has an abundance of flowers and fine trees. I shall spend as much time as possible in it, as I have been advised to do, in the endeavor to get entirely well, if God so wills.

I must say something about my special duties! My first charge will have to do with candle-ends.[1] I believe you know now what that means. Next, I am going to work in the clothes-room. So much for a beginning. We shall see what the good God will bring to pass afterwards.

I have been forgetting to give that "real, true news about myself." I assure you, I did not believe I should suffer so little from this journey. To-day, I feel as usual. You will find that Bordeaux will cure me.

[1] *Je vais faire les souches,* i.e., she is going to piece together candle-ends and place them in a candle-tube for further use.

Some days after, in a much changed hand, she wrote:—

> . . . As to my health, it is certainly better. I am only seized "by the arms," and that is why I am writing so poorly. I believe it is a kind of rheumatism. It is troublesome but not serious. All that the good God wills is *very* good.

And the Superior added:—

> . . . I must subjoin some words of my own, dear Madam, to calm a mother's anxiety. I find Marie de l'Agnus Dei already improved by the change of air. I hope that when her general health is built up her throat will be better. It is a rheumatic trouble, I believe, with which the nervous system has much to do. In any case, it is not grave, though causing enough suffering. Such is the opinion of the doctors who have seen and examined her. We are going to have her examined again and shall give her case the closest attention.

But Marie-Anne was incapable of speaking always of her health. She must speak of Him who filled her soul, of whom she spoke so well. Her sisters were, besides her mother, her usual confidantes.

Bordeaux, November 19, 1899.

> . . . I am glad to hear that you get some perfect little humiliations. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know that on the road to Paradise you have lighted on a vehicle that travels so fast. And really, when one thinks

of it, it seems absurd to be so much afraid of what brings one nearer to God. And it is not success, but the effort, that is to be looked to. Labor on, then, in his great harvest with your numerous fellow-laborers. Grow not weary of the labor, whether things go ill or well, without disgust at the task, which is often arduous, without trouble in the presence of difficulties, without impatience in dealing with intractable subjects. All is counted. God sees all. He compensates for all, better than men do.—Oh! to do good to a single soul—what grace it merits, what glory! I should envy your external labors if I did not love God's good pleasure more.

We are having very cold weather here. It always reminds me of what a certain bishop used to tell us of his *diocese of ice*. He used to say that Ice was the sovereign of that region, with Snow as his faithful companion. Rivers and ponds, mountains and plains, everything and always, except for two months in the year, were merged in one immense glacier, varied only by dark masses of fir forest, with their embroidery of hoarfrost. The inhabitants were poor savages steeped in ignorance; their food, fish seasoned with oil; their dwellings, huts covered with snow. And it is thither that love of God attracts men of superior intelligence, accustomed to European comforts; there they are willing to live and die, with the single hope of bringing to God some of these degraded souls whom the Devil holds captive.—And we complain of insignificant cold, which is warmth compared to what they suffer. Ah! the thought of such heroic sacrifice should make us fall

upon our knees and ask to have some small share in it. At least, let us suffer through the winter without complaint. Let us love the hand of God, who makes the ice no less than the sunbeams. Let us encourage those about us who complain overmuch, and perhaps in that far-off country one soul more will be won to our Lord. Oh! may God give us souls!

This sensitiveness to cold, which was to increase till her last day, was sanctified by her, as were all her other ills. It was at this time that she said to one of her sisters: "Shall we agree to offer up all we suffer from the cold for the missionaries in the North?" When the fine autumn months were succeeded by the winter season and her symptoms were believed to indicate that her malady was developing, her mother, who was beginning to feel anxious, received from her the following:—

December 3, 1899.

Just a few words to reassure you in regard to my condition. I am not at all very ill. You could see at Le Mans that there was nothing the matter, that no organ was seriously affected and that there was only some aching and some nervous weakness, painful but not serious. When this condition is aggravated by cold or by fatigue, I am unable to write, as I find it hard to use my arms, but that is all. Our excellent doctor has conscientiously examined me twice, and he is satisfied there is nothing the matter with me more than I have described. So it is a matter of fortifying the system and of excluding everything that may aggravate painful symp-

toms,—and also, I would add, of their not treating me too nicely or making a great ado about my illness, which will not bring me to Paradise so soon.

That is how the case stands. You need not be alarmed, then, Mamma dear. Though I am not seriously ill I am receiving a care and attention which is truly maternal. The words of Léon Besnardeau are forever coming to my mind: "It is splendid, the care they are taking of me: it is surely worth a *Te Deum.*" And I, like him, am singing a *Te Deum* in my heart.

But I must now add that health is, after all, nothing compared to holiness. Hence, if to become holy I had to suffer all manner of ills, I should submit to them with joy. And although my present sufferings are of small account, I nevertheless hope that God will make use of them in sanctifying me. So that if you love me, as I know you do, how much should you not rejoice, my dear Mamma? All that is best here below is in the cross, and if our Lord vouchsafes to give it to me, we should deem it our greatest happiness. But if you saw my fresh look of health you would think, as I do, that my cross is not very heavy and that my case is not so pitiable. Oh! pray much more that I may be sanctified than that God may send me robust health. Our Lord has much more need of hearts than of arms or legs, although these contribute much to his service when the heart is sanctified.

With this discourse I shall take leave of you, dear Mamma, begging my good angel to convince you that I am not doing badly at all, and

that I am the happiest person in the world,—which is the real truth.

Bordeaux, Christmas, 1899.

My Darling Sisters, One and All:

The peace of Jesus! If my letter is short I shall make up for it in prayers. The Infant Jesus has taken up all my time to-day. Can I begrudge it to Him? So few think of Him! I have availed myself of this sweet obligation of remaining near the Master to tell Him, in every particular, all that I wished for each one of you. He and I have been making up your New Year gifts, and without suspecting it you will be receiving them from above through the hands of your good angels,—for my own angel and they are great friends—even brothers, I believe. They will bring you graces, virtues, blessings, of all sorts, and you will think, perhaps, of praying for your sister, whose blue veil drops upon her joined hands (a sign of extraordinary fervor) when she prays for you. Ask for me—well, just sanctity; all my ambitions stop there.

Let your New Year holidays be joyful and holy. Do good to children whilst doing good to yourselves. Rejoice in the Lord!

A Dieu, each and all of you, whom I love in the Heart of Jesus, the gracious King of the Crib. In Him and through Him let us ever be united, my darlings; and let us walk in his sight upon earth in such wise as to merit a high place in his kingdom. This is the New Year wish of your sister,

Wholly Yours in Our Lord.

Later she writes a special letter to Yvonne.

Bordeaux, January 14, 1900.

I am beginning my letter this evening in order that it may leave here next Sunday. As it will not be filled with news items it will keep for eight days.—We have been having a day so well occupied that it has passed even faster than the preceding ones. We have had the closing of the novena of reparation. This morning a solemn Mass at a quarter of seven. A second and more solemn Mass at a quarter past eight. Then a very solemn Mass at nine and a half, followed by the first Benediction; and after that my own adoration; so that when I left the chapel at eleven my knees had been on duty nearly five hours in our Lord's presence. This afternoon, vespers, adoration and a magnificent Benediction given by His Eminence the Archbishop, after a beautiful sermon by the Reverend Père ———, who had given the novena. What lovely days, these! During them prayer is substance, form, everything, in one's life; one has not time to breathe for anything else: so many interests are bound up with the graces of this day of supreme reparation.

A day, too, of sweetest consolations. Since morning, our Lord's throne, all radiant with lights, has been surrounded by adorers, who have come and gone in the greatest recollection. —Impossible to describe the joy I felt this morning at seeing so large a number of communicants. I seemed to hear from out the ciborium the voice of the Divine Master: *"It is my delight to be with the children of men."* And He found his delight in our little chapel, in which

there were so many hearts prepared to receive Him. What greater joy than to know that our Lord is consoled and happy!

Such are the joys we find in reparation; and they will soon be yours, I hope, sister dear. I finish one novena to begin another. I am begging prayers for you on all hands. Your own contribution will be generosity and fervor, and with that we shall succeed in landing you at your goal. Oh! the novitiate! What a horizon! Before arriving there, try and have the digging done for the foundations, so that without more ado you may start to build. This is accomplished, as you know, by humility and abnegation,—or, in other words, *you* must sink out of sight. On the ruins of Yvonne may Jesus reign triumphant. Ask the same grace for me, who have great need of it.

The other day, the sister of one of our young Mothers here took her vows at Toulouse, and afterwards, on her way to Rennes, stopped over at Bordeaux. When I saw the two sisters reunited, I glanced at the horizon and thought of the day that would bring the same good fortune to you and me. Let us not think we are purchasing it at too high a price or are kept waiting for it too long. Jesus knows what He is doing. Peace, confidence, gratitude!

This day of reunion under the same religious habit she was not to see, except from her place in Heaven. At this time the thought of Heaven visited her mind more and more frequently, as is often the case with those who are soon to die. She could hardly help speaking of Heaven continually, and as the days wore on the more

her heart lived there. A letter to her mother closes as follows:—

> . . . *A Dieu,* my dear, very dear Mamma. Pardon me my curt style of writing, which hardly does justice to my feelings; but in the rôle of suppliant, which is mine, I don't deem it a fault to be lengthy and as fervent as possible, to obtain for you all graces.
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> *Sursum corda!* [1] Let us always live with those who have returned to the bosom of God. It is there I am united with you, my dear Mamma, and am yours with all possible affection and respect.
>
> *Easter, 1900.*
>
> Alleluia! That is to-day's first word. A pure blue sky, a springtime brightness with a touch of summer warmth, delightful green foliage and a profusion of budding flowers. . . . And withal, the Church rejoicing and filling our hearts with her own joy. . . . How can our lips be silent and not send forth their alleluias,—a word that belongs not to earth, but is an echo from our eternal, our happy, our holy country above!
>
> So it seems, events have been occurring affecting our family circle. My good dear René has been so much of a brother to me that I feel much moved to hear that his marriage has been decided upon. He will be a good *père de famille* and will make his wife very happy. Has Jeanne [2] taken the habit? If she has not as yet,

[1] Raise up your hearts.
[2] A sister of René's and a religious of the Congregation of Notre-Dame at Les Oiseaux.

I should like to know the date beforehand, so as to be with her in spirit at that great moment.

Bordeaux, May, 1900.

My Dearest Yvonne:

The peace of Jesus! After you have written so often, my pen is ashamed of remaining so long inactive. But I should not excuse myself to one who will soon know whether one has always the time to do justice to her affections when she has cheerfully placed her life at the disposal of One who knows so well how to fill it. We are Réparatrices; which means that we are, by the very fact, charged with all sinners and all sins.

But what a burden it imposes! We must efface, repair, destroy, convert, console, sanctify,—all this, frequently, without seeing a living soul, but only by each moment's work, by the duty of the day, of the hour, of the minute. Time passes, time flies. It carries us along with it, and the great task entrusted to us seems to grow more urgent with every passing day.

We have had many changes during this past month. But you know that when there is a change of Superiors, there is no change in the hand or the heart that directs. Whether it is one or another that becomes the representative of God, one can and ought to repeat always with equal truth, "It is the Lord!" A little of the spirit of faith, a good sound blow dealt the heart, a little effort (and but little is needed) to love one's new Mother with all one's heart—that is all that is required.

And the result is happiness, great as He is great who gives it; ever youthful, as all is that

comes from Heaven; penetrating, like everything that is in the soul itself; supernatural as the whole religious life is.

My dear sister, do you know what this happiness of the religious life is like? Oh! you cannot know it yet, and long years will pass before you know it well; for, although I have tasted of it these five years, I see that I am only beginning to understand it and that my horizon is ever growing broader. . . . Let us, then, respond to the care of the Master by a never-ending *Deo gratias*. But words are not enough. Let us devote ourselves and suffer and submit and do God's work, each minute as it passes, till we reach the day when Heaven's gates will be at last opened to us.

May Mary be more and more your Mother and your model. Pray to her for me, who love you through her heart and am united with you in its immaculate sanctuary.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

To one of her friends:

Bordeaux, May 13, 1900.

So, then, my dear, a new tie unites us *in Christo Jesu!* Impossible to describe the happiness it brings me. In Heaven (and how delicious to think that it is through the Beloved Disciple that our Lord reveals it to us) there is a special place for souls who on earth have been united to Him alone. It is only they that can sing a canticle which Saint John does not name, but which must be the special canticle of love, for they alone have given Him their undivided affection. Through the infinite mercy

of the Lord, our voices will be heard together in this canticle, and in the eternal festival nothing shall separate us, forming, as we shall, a part of this choice and privileged choir.

O happy companion of the Lamb whose sacrifice went before his triumph, rise joyously above nature's fears and that dreaded solitude of the heart!—When our Lord gives one of these exceptional graces He often leaves the soul a prey to sadness, as though to give it to understand that these superior graces are worth infinitely more than the joys and consolations of the passing hours. But do not fear: Jesus is always Jesus. He whose blessed members we kiss on the cross has charms indescribable. It is not enough to press our lips to his blessed wounds: let us attach to them our hearts. He will then pass into us; He will abide in our hearts, with all that is his; and our happiness shall be full, for Jesus is not separable from happiness,—real and genuine happiness in time and in eternity.

No one, on reading these letters, which are so elevated in tone and often so excellent in form as well as in substance, would have any suspicion of the increasing sufferings of the writer. And yet her ills were multiplying fast and becoming harder to endure. The symptoms attributed to rheumatism were becoming much worse and obliged our poor little religious to make incredible efforts to follow her rule. And yet she was the first to appear at all community exercises, at least till she became quite incapable of moving from the one spot. To one who expressed her astonishment at her regularity she said: "I need the help of the angels, for I don't under-

stand myself how I can get about." When she had to be lifted up or carried she made it a subject of self-reproach, accusing herself of giving trouble to others. But, in reality, what a noble example she set the community when in her endeavor to reach a place to which duty called her she would fall on the way and be found lying there, sometimes quite bruised, just as long before the Lamb who bore all the sins of the world had fallen on his way to Calvary. Her patience stood every test, whilst her kindness of manner towards her sisters was familiar to all in the house. Incapable of any fatiguing work, she always found means of doing a kind turn. It was always she who took upon herself the preparing of surprises for feast-days and for extra recreations. She spared neither her time,—and she needed more time than others to write or draw, — nor her imagination, which was inexhaustible in its resources, nor withal her sweet gayety of manner. Notwithstanding her condition, she never absented herself from the ordinary recreations and as far as possible helped to make them more joyful and more promotive of sisterly union. When she was quite unable to speak she would bring her crayon to recreation and her roguish little sketches would still draw a smile from Mothers and sisters. She made it a point to be present at these recreations even when her getting there seemed quite impossible. She had, consequently, to spend much of her time on the stairs, and if any one lighted on her there she would not allow her to be detained, saying, "Don't stop—it is not permitted." Reaching the end of her journey, she would take the last place, or seek out the elderly religious; and when the subject of the conversation was above the ordinary it was easy to see the interest she took in it, by reason both of her character and of her

education. She always had upon her table a poor print representing our Lord carrying his cross. "I am very fond of it," she would say: "it is miraculous." Below the picture she had written these words upon which she had so much meditated: *Jesus autem tacebat.*[1]

She, too, was silent about everything that might evoke either pity or marks of esteem. But her virtues shone out despite her self-restraint, and even from the beginning of her religious life she bore upon her that divine seal which it is impossible to counterfeit. Once, when she was a novice, she met the Reverend Père Blanchard, who was Assistant for France in the Society of Jesus and who afterwards died in the odor of sanctity. She asked him for his blessing, when the Father, regarding her for a moment, said to her: "My child, you will become a saint: I see it in your looks." Another day, when she had accused herself to her Superior at Toulouse (doubtless, of yielding to discouragement), the Mother scolded her and said to her severely: "Go, tell the Father who is giving the retreat that you are nothing but a *chiffon!*"[2] The novice, in all simplicity, went and said what she was told to say, and the Father answered with a smile: *"Eh! bien,* here is a *chiffon* which God will make use of to wash away many sins in the world."

Before bringing our narrative down to the close of her stay at Bordeaux, we shall add a few of her letters to members of her family, as these, better than anything else, will enable us to see into the depths of this angelic soul.

[1] But Jesus held his peace.
[2] Ordinarily, a *rag.*

To her Mother:

Bordeaux, June 4, 1900.

. . . O my God, when shall we be enjoying that perfect repose above, far from the turmoil of earth? When shall we see God without these shadows? When shall we possess Him in a peace of soul that shall know no ending? But the path which God has marked out for us must lead to a *very* beautiful Heaven; for it is a thorny path, and thorns give promise of roses.

. . . I have been thinking what a mother's heart must be when even a sister's heart is so easily affected and so deeply attached. I might almost say I pity you, for there must be suffering when one has eight other selves to care for. But what merit also!

To Yvonne:

Bordeaux, July 1, 1900.

I imagine, my dear little sister, you will again, more than once, encounter difficulties like those you have already passed through. "The life of man is a warfare." Courage is needed, and patience and love. All passes except eternal merit, and the grace of our Lord, which is always at hand to help us. Don't fear: when the moment of the great sacrifice is come you will feel you have the strength to offer it. The religious life is well worth the trouble one experiences in attaining to it. What trouble is not taken in the world to bring about a grand and brilliant marriage. And we, whose ambition is a divine alliance, shall we be slack and indifferent and shrink before obstacles? Poor Jesus! What little faith we have and how little we appreciate our Divine Spouse! He does us so much honor,

and we honor Him so little! Let us, then, love Him more and contemn ourselves the more. I would urge you to give yourself wholly and entirely to the Heart of Jesus and to cultivate well this devotion. It is the key to incomparable treasures; it will teach one many secrets; secrets of sacrifice and of generosity, secrets of prayer and of confidence. And our Blessed Lady? Have you ever prayed to her without feeling aided and sustained? She is a Mother; and oh! what a Mother! Confidence, joy, sacrifice!

Bordeaux, August 5, 1900.

My Dear Good Françoise:

Two months' vacation at Le Patys—what a prospect! Especially when you have left a good year behind you and have a still better one before you. I congratulate you heartily on your prizes. Tell me what they are. I feel sure that during your holidays you will have the first prize as *"charme vivant"* and will endeavor to make virtue loved and admired everywhere, as well as the amiability that goes with it.

On Tuesday I saw Monsieur l'abbé, who told me about you all, to my great joy. And you, when shall I see you, sister dear? Only the good God knows. Just at present I am something of a worn-out machine. Southern suns are not a bit too warm for me, and northern fogs are too cold for my legs and arms, which are hard as wood. But that cannot prevent God from disposing of things otherwise, so that some fine morning I may wake up somewhere in your neighborhood. *Fiat! fiat! O Jesu dulcissime!* [1] All will be perfect from the mo-

[1] Grant it, grant it, most sweet Jesus!

ment You will it, and great will be my joy to see once more those whom I love.

Meanwhile, let us perfect ourselves more and more against the day of our meeting, sometime or other. I have only two minutes left for writing, owing to—the 15th of August. But my whole heart goes out to you to tell you to love Jesus and, ever and always, strongly, generously, tenderly. Tell dear Mamma I am sighing for a letter from her, as the hart panteth after the fountains of water. If she only knew how long it is since she wrote. But I understand all.

A Dieu! I embrace you all and love you all in our Lord.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

Bordeaux, August 12, 1900.

My Dear and Untiring Correspondent:

I do not know how to thank you; for I am so touched by the fervor with which you have responded to my wishes that I cannot put my gratitude into words. But it is deep, I assure you, and now, if it be possible, I love you more than ever. Had you given me all the treasures of France and Navarre I should not value them as much as these pieces of embroidery made with so much love for God and so much affection for me. Thanks, my dear little sister. It is at the feet of our Lord that I shall tell you how grateful I am. It is only there that I can make some little return for what is done for me.

We shall be united in heart at this delightful Feast of the Assumption, which, in reminding us of Heaven and the triumph of our Blessed Lady, bids us exult in the thought that we are one day to have a share in her joys. *Sursum*

corda! When we are together above we shall have many things to say to one another. We shall tell of the wonders which Jesus will have wrought in us; and I, for my part, rejoice in advance as I admire in your soul the graces He has lavished upon you. I assure you that the rude path which is opened up for you, as you once told me it was, is indeed the better one. There is no illusion *there,* nor anything for self-love to feed upon. All goes direct to God, for there is no room for self-complacence. Much detachment is required to receive consolations without feeling they are in a manner due to us, or without a too natural avidity. Nature welcomes them, but our love may be as great, or even greater, in a life guided by faith alone; and is not a following of our Lord over rough and thorny paths more pleasing to Him than our enjoyment of his favors under a serene sky?

I know not why I am writing to you in this vein: prehaps you have no need of it; but it is always good to recall such thoughts. Oh! let us live solely for God! Let us serve Him with brave hearts, with generosity, confidence and faith. All things are possible when one *gives* all.

But the letters of Marie de l'Agnus Dei are only a partial revelation of the thoughts of her soul. When her generous heart opened itself without reserve, in the solitude of her cell and under the eye of her Divine Spouse, it sent forth, at one time, cries of love, at another appeals from an anguished soul, the record of which cannot but fill us with emotion. In the case of any soul, it is in such notes as we have from the pen of Marie-Anne,—

notes written rapidly and as occasion occurs,—that we have the best indication of its real beauty. Graces received in a moment of fervor, painful struggles against the rebellion of nature, sufferings weighing heavily and painfully on the soul, transports of love wafting the soul above things of earth, joys and fears and hopes, resignation and desire,—all these are mingled together as they are in the actual life of the writer. To reduce them to order would be to deprive them of their personal and living interest; and hence we shall give them in the present case as we find them.

All Saints, November 1.

There is a feast-day above as well as here below, and we poor exiles are sighing for the day that shall give us possession of God. O light of the heavenly city! Light never extinguished, light revealing naught but God—when will one of thy rays be shed upon my soul?

. . . My God, I would live for You, and only for You, and yet I am incessantly tormented by creatures, which would fain draw my thoughts to themselves and away from You. I have scarcely found You for a moment when I lose You; and how I must labor and toil to find You amid so many distractions! When will the day come when You will be to me all in all things,—when I shall hold converse with no one else,—when I shall see nothing, nothing but You?

My Jesus, to You will I go in the midst of all these shadows. You see my good will, but You know my weakness. Trembling and sighing for You, I cast myself at your feet, into your arms,

to see henceforth naught but You, and to love You as You were loved by my brethren above.

Christmas, 1899 [anniversary of her vows].

Two years! Would I could count two hundred such years! . . . O land of exile, be fruitful for me, that I may serve my adorable Master during the time allotted me for his service. —Jesus, cure me in such wise that I may not have to take thought for myself but for You alone.

Christmas! my sweet Jesus! Christmas, O my Mother!

January 5, 1900.

O Jesus, when I see in my brothers and sisters those blessed germs of vocation, I understand well that it is for me to suffer. A return must be made for those graces, and it is very natural I should be the one to make it, as I was the first to receive this grace of graces.—Senior in the second group, this is my right of seniority. Not a moment's repose till the youngest are enrolled under your divine standard. Then the angels will sing the *Nunc dimittis,* and I shall go to prepare for my dear young charges a place in Heaven in the ranks of those who follow the Lamb.

January 8, Feast of Saint Agnes.

Agnes, when shall I have your love for Jesus? O virgin, follow the Lamb for me and ask Him to give me a Martyr's strength, for that martyrdom which is unceasing. Teach me the canticle of the Lamb,—a canticle of joy, of love, of glory,—so that after chanting it on earth I may

go and continue it on high. Agnes, Agnes, help me, strengthen me, love me, as I love you. Agnes, purify me!

The voice of the Beloved: "I have two kinds of martyrs. Martyrs of love have a thousand times offered Me their lives, and they are the more pleasing to Me as all the blood in their veins is, in a manner, already shed for Me. In Heaven, this offering is renewed eternally in transports of joy. Why, notwithstanding my having preferred for Myself the martyrdom of blood, have I refused it to children whom I love so much? It is because my Heart has special need of martyrs of love. I have a martyr in every one who suffers for my interests.

The following words were written with her blood:—

All for Jesus, through Mary, and for souls.
MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

February 2.

Jesus all-faithful, I have confidence in You! Jesus, better to die than to offend. Jesus, I offer myself to You, to labor much, suffer much, love much. Jesus, in the name of your holy cross, let my life not be useless!

February 22.

Every child of the Church should mortify his body in Lent. . . . I cannot do anything in the way of fasting, or even of abstaining. Obliged as others are to do penance, I resolve:

1. To conquer by energy the infirmity of my members.
2. To obey, obey, obey.

3. To trample my self-love under foot and to behave to myself with extreme rigor and firmness.

To this end I implore your grace, O Jesus, who are the strength of the weak, and your help, O Mary, who are the health of the sick.

March 4.

Go forward, at any cost! ! ! Conquer or die! Struggle on! . . . Lose not sight of the crown, O my soul, but above all look up to the God whom you serve and who is glorified by your struggles! . . .

O my Jesus, what a strange life You have appointed for me! I am still quite lost in it. Oh! help me to second your action by everything in my power; which means to combat the distemper to the utmost and yet accept it with all my heart. A singular twofold combat! A strange existence, which cuts me in two at every instant! My beloved Master, console me for this by giving me souls, that I may give them to You and cast them into your arms, saying, "My Jesus, still more immolations, if they are worth so great a prize."

O my beloved, You do well in not showing me any fruits of my sad condition. My pride would rob You of them. May it bear some fruit, however: why should I cumber the ground?

Come, Jesus: a thousand days of anguish, of burdens, of crosses, are forgotten when for a single minute one has some feeling of your presence. . . . O Heaven! Heaven! but I refuse neither labor nor humiliation. Give me only your grace and your love.

March 18.

O my God, I have confidence in You. I have need of telling You so. I, who am so poor in all goods, have confidence in You. Pardon me my want of faith and confidence. . . . I go to sleep in your arms. Give me Yvonne, though it should cost me my life. And for the rest, all that is your will I shall love and bless You for.

March 19.

O Saint Joseph, I feel keenly the need of consecrating myself to you in a special manner. [This is, doubtless, the grace of the novena she had just made in preparation for the feast.] O holy spouse of my dearly beloved Mother, take me as your child. Help me to walk in the path of duty, with heart dilated and eyes fixed on Heaven. Give me peace, poverty, labors, obscurity. Give me purity and love. . . . Give me constancy and strength.

O good Saint, bless me with that hand which touched Jesus and Mary.

March 21.

O dolorous cross! O life, how shall I accept thee still! O my soul, my body! double burden, and so heavy—when will you and I be in security? . . . O Jesus, when shall I ever conquer myself? O weakness, O misery . . . O humility, come and repair all, efface all! . . . Jesus! Jesus!

March 22.

To work is to pray, but to suffer is still better. These are said to be the words of Father de Ravignan.—O my God, I thank You for giving

me the better part. Grant that I may accept it always as such. Give me the strength I so much ask of You, and a tranquil and sustained energy. . . . Make my will pliant under the hands of superiors, inflexible in the discharge of duty, generous, energetic under suffering, in anguish, in anxiety, in difficulty.

O my soul, the end will come: what will you *then* wish had been done? Do it *now,* when you have the time.

March 23.

I desire so much to be a saint! O my Jesus, sanctify me. All for You, all for souls, nothing for me. *Tua sum, O Sponse, et Tecum, Jesu!* [1]

April 1.

The cross! When shall I learn to carry it? When will my shoulders be fitted to the weight that is crushing me? O Jesus, Jesus, give me love's full strength or Heaven, for I am failing utterly! . . . Jesus, my grace and my happiness, I find all in You.

I seem to hear our Lord reproaching me in a whisper down in the bottom of my heart, for not yet understanding the mysterious name He has given me. Does it savor of glory? or of royalty? or of superiority? or of pleasure? Oh! no, not here below. And it never will till one has passed through death. On earth, the word "lamb" bespeaks suffering, patience, immolation. Little by little our Lord has clipped away what was needed for the support of my poor earthly life, just as the shearer lops off tufts of wool from the sheep. And I, for my part, have for-

[1] I am yours, my Spouse, and with You, Jesus.

gotten my name and the part assigned me. I have complained, I have resisted. The divine shears have wounded me because of my foolish resistance. . . . Ah! Why am I astonished to find what I have sought, to receive what I have asked for, to realize what I have wished? Better not to have come at all than not to go on to the very end. What I lack is confidence, for I fear . . . and our Lord in the Eucharist tells me: *"Ego sum: noli timere: Ego semper tecum."* [1] O my only Beloved, pardon me: *Ego semper tecum.*

And now, behold me led to the place of sacrifice. The cross is raised, it falls upon my shoulders, and I hear the command, "Go forward!" Alas! I do not go forward, but fall back in utter weakness! Who will assist me? *Ego semper tecum!* Behold the Good Shepherd—He takes the cross on his own shoulders and carries the lamb on his Heart,—and He goes all the way to Calvary. But there the lamb must die. Ah! you know not the Heart of the Shepherd! The cross is laid upon the ground, and it is the Shepherd who has *Himself* nailed to it. . . . When He is dead, even then He wills that his Heart be opened. . . . Why? Because the lamb is crouching at the foot of his cross and the Shepherd has found worthy of Himself but one kind of nourishment for his sheep, and it is his own blood, the blood from out his own Heart! . . . If the lamb dare now complain, what can be thought of her?

My dear Jesus, when I thus put myself in the presence of the truth, I do not understand myself. Have pity on my weakness; make me dif-

[1] It is I: fear not: I am always with you.

ferent from what I am. Make me understand my happiness and your graces.

Holy Saturday.

Yes, my God, I will die, and I will bury myself with You, despite the repugnances, the fears, the horror of nature. Take, O Lord, and receive. If for the Society, You find it better that I should carry the interior cross, *Ecce ancilla Domini—fiat!* [1] I do more than drink of the chalice: I wish to empty it to the dregs. Do You hear the tempest that is raised in my soul? O Master, fortify me! Make me devoted, generous. . . . Jesus, I am here on both knees, before your bloody cross. . . . You cannot refuse me. Behold your Mother in tears: "O my Son, I am thirsting for the sanctification of this soul." And You, Lord, say once more: "Woman, behold thy child! Strong woman, behold thy child made strong; stainless woman, behold thy child all pure; generous woman, behold thy now generous child."

So now, after these three days, I rise up confident, despite the bitterness into which You are pleased to plunge my soul. I will avail myself of the horror which this bitterness inspires for creatures and for myself to detach myself from all that is not You. I leave my nature in the tomb, begging You to make an entire immolation of it. I take your cross, my cross, and follow You, with your grace.

The triduum of which she speaks she sums up thus:—

[1] Behold the handmaid of the Lord—be it done!

Our Lord has given me the grace to wish to abase myself, to lessen myself, and particularly to let Him have his way in all this. Peace in my sufferings, peace in my humiliation. . . . I seem to be devoid of sensibility. . . . I know not whether it is that true peace *which transcends all feeling;* but why trouble myself? God loves me, and my one desire is to love Him.

Tacere, well understood, well practised, well loved, suffering in silence—sinking out of view.

All through the cross. All through my crucifix. In God, my soul; on the cross, my body; in the tabernacle, my heart.

She then consecrates herself again to the Blessed Virgin:—

For the greater glory of God, to give honor and joy to Mary, Queen of Heaven, my Mother, I, her unworthy child and her poorest and most useless servant, confiding in her goodness and impelled by my love for her, resign into her hands, now and forever, all that belongs to me,—not only my body, my soul and my heart, but likewise all my actions and all my merits, past, present and future, with the formal intention that Mary shall dispose of them as she pleases and as her interests or her good pleasure may require.

And although I shall be free to do or to suffer according to the intentions which obedience or the grace of God may dictate, I wish, nevertheless that all may pass through the hands of Mary and be blessed and approved by her, before it is offered to her Divine Son. I desire

and I ask to be considered by our Blessed Lady as one set apart for her service, or as a poor insignificant slave over whom she enjoys all rights.

Be, then, to me, O my Mother, a true Mother, to whom I shall owe the most precious life of the spirit, the only life I much value. Be thou to me an assured asylum of mercy. Receive me, change me, correct me, sanctify me. Suffer not one who is so entirely thine to be so unworthy of thee. Form in me another Jesus, that I may through thee be born again in grace and in humility.

Teach me during my exile to know Jesus crucified, and when, like Him, I shall have come down from the cross, secure for me for eternity the sight and possession of Jesus triumphant. Amen.

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

Witnesses and vouchers of this act: Saint Joseph, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Agnes, Saint John Berchmans and my Guardian Angel.

Done at Bordeaux, the 14th of June, 1900. Corpus Christi.

June 15.

To live for You, O Jesus, for You to die! For You this continual work of destruction, slow, painful, profound. O Jesus, You are flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone! If I am destroyed, You cannot be destroyed. O Jesus, all is well, yes, very well. I suffer and make suffer, however. Have pity, Heart of love, strengthen, console.

July 8.

Vox Dilecti.[1]

I am thy Well-Beloved: upon the angry deep
Thy bark shall fear nor wave nor fiercest wind
that blows;
For fearless at the helm unceasing watch I keep,
Whilst on my Heart secure thou takest thy re-
pose.

I am thy Well-Beloved: my own life shall be
thine:
In Eucharistic bliss shall you and I be *one*.
By prayer and sacrifice thy victim life, like mine,
Shall wholly nurtured be from morn to setting
sun.

I am thy Well-Beloved; on Me in realms above
Fix thou thy gaze; all else is nought but fleeting
show.
I fain would have the whole, not part, of thy
soul's love;
Whilst I, for heart of thine, my own on thee
bestow.

So much courage, so much generosity, so much resignation must needs secure the result which Marie de l'Agnus Dei desired. She was really a victim chosen by God for sacrifice. As to her physical condition at this precise period, she was, in the first place, unable to walk except by dragging herself along with the aid of a cane, which was sometimes insufficient to support her, so that she had to lean against the wall and was continually

[1] The voice of the Beloved.

falling. Her hands were so helpless that she could no longer dress without assistance or carry anything which was in the least degree heavy. She suffered much pain in her head and in her back and, worst of all, she was unable to swallow. It was chiefly her throat and vocal organs that were affected, and taking food became a very difficult task. A strange sort of paralysis was gradually taking possession of her whole system, and when the improvement which followed her arrival at Bordeaux was spent, the doctor began to have doubts about the nature of the malady. He studied the symptoms for some time and then plainly expressed his fears to the Superior of the house, telling her: "Our patient's trouble can never have been a nervous one. My conviction now is that she is suffering from a disease of the spinal marrow, and that it is far advanced." Imagine the surprise of the Superior, then of the other religious, and finally of the family of the sufferer. It was all so unexpected, so different from what had been always supposed, so new to their thoughts; for now they had to deal with a malady that was critical and indeed beyond all cure, after they had been so long persuaded that the condition of the patient need cause no anxiety.

She herself had no difficulty in being convinced, for she had been long struggling, through obedience, against the evidence of her own feelings. And after the first moments of surprise, her sister religious were also convinced, for they had daily confirmation of the doctor's opinion; but not so the family of Marie-Anne, who had not seen her for a year. When the Superior, after some reflection, deemed it her duty to apprise Mme. Hervé-Bazin of the situation, the same cry of pain was heard at the family fireside: "It is impossible! The doctor is

mistaken!" A very natural impression, surely, especially for a mother at the thought of danger threatening her child. Madame Hervé-Bazin immediately set out for Bordeaux. She wished to see with her own eyes and to read in her daughter's eyes the real truth, whatever it might be. When she arrived at the convent and they brought her the sufferer, who on that particular day could not walk except with the aid of two other religious, then, alas! there was little room for doubt. The following days could only accentuate the painful first impression. Nevertheless, with that reserve energy which is at a mother's command for the saving of the life of her child, she resolved, first of all, to make sure of the nature of the disease, and then to take in hand herself her daughter's cure. She requested and easily obtained from the kindness of superiors a consultation by two physicians. The consultation was not entirely conclusive and left a ray of hope that the disease might, after all, be located in the nervous system, and therefore not hopeless.

The news was brought to the little sufferer, who smiled and said nothing. To her all was clear: she saw now that her sacrifice had been accepted, that it was half consummated, that she was going to die. At the same time, with the remarkable instinct of an invalid, aided by her own natural intelligence, she divined that her friends were going to fight a hard battle for her life, and that she would be subjected to all manner of nursing and medical treatment such as she considered incompatible with her religious life. Hence, a first form of suffering, which she accepted only in obedience to superiors and after repeated assurances that nothing in all this would mar, and much in it would even second, her act of voluntary immolation. In the next place, according

to her own forecast, her troubles would issue in a palsy, which would deprive her of all power of motion, would make the taking of food almost impossible and, worst of all, would finally attack the brain!

Such was the prospect clearly before her mind, and during the year or more which she lived, even to her last day, she was convinced that she was going to lose her reason. Needless to say that such a culmination of her troubles was hard to accept; and yet it was included in the holocaust which this generous child made to her Lord. She had all the merit of actually enduring it, though, in God's mercy she was spared the reality; for never for an instant was her reason impaired or her thinking confused. And we should add that this was matter of surprise to the physicians, as immunity for the brain in such cases is exceptional.

But what was so clear to the intuition of the patient was less clear to others. When Mme. Hervé-Bazin left Bordeaux she was still uncertain as to what she should believe. Shortly after reaching home she received the following letter from Marie-Anne:—

Bordeaux, September 2, 1900.

We do not go into retreat till to-morrow night, and Reverend Mother Superior has been kind enough to bid me write to you before that, so that you may be quiet in mind whilst I am mounting the heights of the Exercises. But you must be aware now that it is very difficult to send you any reliable news, seeing that my barometer is always so variable. Saturday and Sunday I was well; since last evening I have been fatigued, without knowing why; this even-

ing I shall perhaps be very well, without any apparent reason. God knows what He is doing—that is enough, provided I am supple under his hand, morally as well as physically.

How happy I was to see you, my dear Mamma! The good God has been *very* good to have reunited us at last. I hope now we shall see each other at shorter intervals. And ought we not bless the ills I suffer when they bring us the joy of meeting oftener?

Bordeaux, September 9, 1900.

You ask me to tell you about my health, and I shall do so in all simplicity. X may have told you that I have almost entirely lost my voice, and this makes me anything but an agreeable person to visit. My arms and legs are in much the same condition as my throat. They, too, refuse me their aid often enough. I have not changed in appearance, and as long as I can eat I shall be able to hold out. The doctor is not yet sure about my case. For my part, I can better feel than express, and I don't feel certain as to what is the matter. What I understand best of all is that it is a great grace that has made me discover the marvels of charity lying hid in the Society. Each and all, especially Superiors, show me a kindness which is at once delightful and confounding. And yet my ways are so uninviting. Indeed, no one is so little fitted as I to awaken affection or compassion in others. But the Heart of Jesus is here, and it makes its presence felt. I assure you, I am each day happier than on the day before.

Bordeaux, November 11, 1900.

To one of her Sisters:

I believe this week the *rue du Temple* is to be blessed with your presence, and it is there I must look for you henceforth. You will soon be busy again with the courses, works, visits. And it occurs to me that I, to whom absolutely nothing is left but the interior life, should in the life of Angers represent recollection, solitude and prayer, otherwise called the part of Moses on the mount. So don't be astonished if my letters take on a more interior and pious tone. And, indeed, I assure you that I feel little at home with anything that is not concerned with the good God, and that I have to force myself to speak of other things; for He is the only One with whom I have continual and direct relations.

To find God, it suffices to relinquish creatures and oneself. If we are unable, or know not how, to effect this rude severance from the creature, God takes it in hand Himself, provided our wills are well disposed; and then we find ourselves poor, little, miserable, helpless and deserted. It draws many a sigh from self-love and sensibility. But if the soul recognizes its feebleness and seeks not to disguise it, God inclines toward it and says to it: *"Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad Me";* which means, "If any one is *little,—quite* little,—let him come to Me." Then the heart is opened and is at once flooded with God, who enters the soul with greater force than that of a huge wave dashing through a narrow cleft. The heart is not only filled but overflows with God, and all that touches the heart seems to have been plunged into God. It

is the grace of graces, the infinite grace. And to receive it, what is required? To be quite little. I have become more and more persuaded that humility is not to be found where it is oftenest sought for. It consists not so much in beautiful sentiments, or in profound thoughts, or even in acts, which are so often furnished with a hook, whether one wishes it or not. Humility is a most simple and sincere contempt of self, shown in a forgetfulness of self which seems to have become natural, and in a deep sense of the *allness* of God, which begets in the soul no less confidence than reverence.

We have been mounting high, my dear, and traveling far. Happy we if we finally attain to that eminent *simplicity* which is at the root of true humility of heart! My wish for you, meanwhile, is that you may be that *parvula* whom God loves. God is all, we are nothing.

If we were not in possession of her precious little notes, we should not be so sure that her realization of what was in store for her was so complete; but we have their testimony before us; and besides, we have the testimony of a friend of hers, a religious who during a short stay at Bordeaux conversed intimately with her. "I am going to Heaven," she told her. "The end will surely come, but before that, before that . . . it may be for a long time! . . . I am destined to become an 'idiot,' if I linger on for long. Don't think this is all imagination. I have heard the Mother who is the Prefect of Health telling Mother Superior what the doctors have been predicting. They do not know that I am aware of it, but it seems to be by God's permission that I have come to know it, for now I can make the sacrifice whilst

I am in my right mind. Long before now have I told Him to take all; but—it will be hard!"

And from her own pen we have the following:—

July 11.

Quid retribuam? Since the 3rd I have had permission for daily communion. . . . Is it possible? I? . . . O my Jesus, let us make haste. If I am soon to become an idiot, I must be a saint first, and this last month has shown me that sickness can cast me to the ground.—Humility, love, sacrifice. . . . The victim should be pure, and if I accept the sacrifice, it is, as You know, only because I hope to be a victim like You, to make good the meaning of my name and to save souls! . . . Oh! prayer, suffering, love, death! . . . and joy always!

July 13.

. . . I begin to have hopes of not living much longer. Oh! what a happiness! Let us mend our pace! Let us go to the sacrifice courageously, and, as all will soon be over, let us not fear to burn the candle at both ends. No more of creatures, no more of self. Look only on Jesus; have Him only in the heart. Yet a little while, and my eyes will see Him face to face and my heart will burn at last with a love in some degree worthy of Him. Ah! on life depends eternity. My minutes are henceforth eternal. Oh! courage and generosity!

August 15.

I am living to-day a little more in Heaven than upon earth. When I think of my Mother in her triumph and amidst a blaze of heavenly

light, how it makes my heart beat! And she is, indeed, my Mother! . . . My body has suffered much since morning . . . but I am happy: Mary, my Mother, is in Heaven.

August 19.

O my God, You call me to suffer: here I am: Lord Jesus, crucify me.

Crucify my feet . . . the right, the left—yes, Lord Jesus, yes, I love You!

Crucify my hands. . . . Stretch them, nail them . . . yes, Lord Jesus, yes, I love You!

Crucify my back . . . rend it, torture it . . . yes, Lord Jesus, yes, I love You!

Crucify my shoulders . . . bruise them, crush them . . . yes, Lord Jesus, yes, I love You!

Crown me with thorns, O Friend of my soul, thus crowned for me! Here I am, Lord Jesus, crown me with thorns.

And that I may resemble You the more, take the reed and strike . . . for an hour, a day, forever! Yes, Lord Jesus, yes, I love You!

Finally, pierce my heart with the lance that pierced yours, and drain it of the last drops of my blood. O Lord Jesus, I love You!

But in this state of death, give me two things: strength to pray without ceasing and the grace to glorify You without measure. O Lord Jesus, have pity on me!

I accept all, I love all, I will all, but I reject, I hate sin.

Crucify me, but sanctify me!

May my cross be the cross of the good thief—more than that—O Jesus, may my cross be your cross!

I wish to die like You, and first to suffer like You.

I wish to die without leaving my Mother,[1] without any secrecy in her regard. I wish to die, first, for my Heavenly Father, and next for my Mother the Society. I wish to suffer for holy souls, like Saint John; I wish to suffer for souls once living in sin, like Magdalen; I wish to suffer for sinners, like your executioners.

O Lord Jesus, I am ready: crucify me!

O Lord Jesus, I am ready: sanctify me.

And it was these dispositions that she brought with her into her annual retreat. What wonder that God inclined to her aid and imparted to her something of his divine secrets. From the very beginning her soul reflects the divine light.

I have received the grace of being convinced that this retreat is for me the last, and that it is to prepare me for a year of painful trials before the final crucifixion.

Next year I shall be the *retreatant of eternity!* . . . The Demon seems to know it, for all is fury around my soul. It is so painful to be dragging about my body that I have said to myself ten times over that a retreat was out of the question.

It is a good sign: courage! With what fervor should I not be penetrated! How precious is this supreme grace. I am making provision for a terrible year! And then . . . I may be carried off in a few days . . . I feel that my strength is giving out.

[1] The Society?

And the souls waiting for me! *Petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis.*[1] No one gives what he has not. O God, give me holiness! *Ecce fiat!* You know that this is the whole of my spirituality.

I feel growing in me a desire for self-abandonment. *Laudet, revereatur, serviat. . . .*[2] For me it is always that humble and filial abandonment of a heart that wills all, takes all, loves all.

It seems to me that my model is our Lord stretching Himself on the cross. I must behave with redoubled submission, generosity, confidence, love, zeal for souls.

O my crucifix, may I, too, become a crucifix. My God, You enjoy all rights over me. . . . *Ecce! . . . Fiat!*

The greatest grace that God could bestow upon me is this crucifixion of my whole being. Purified, repaired, my members will be able to chant the *Te Deum Laudamus!*

O cross of my Jesus! O my Jesus on the cross! crucify for me all that is not You. May I suffer with You who have deigned to suffer for me. May I suffer for souls, poor souls who are being lost.

It is only the cross that makes the angels of the earth. Let us remain on the cross. Let us kiss the cross. Oh! how You have loved me, my Jesus on the cross! I, too, wish to love pain without measure, but sin never. It is by You that I hope to be made pure.

[1] They asked for bread and there was no one to break it unto them.—*Lament. Jer.*

[2] (Man was created) to *praise, reverence* and *serve* God.—*St. Ign. Sp. Ex.*

. . . God desires my sanctification. It is the only thing that He desires for me. To it He sacrifices all else. It is for this that He sacrificed Jesus. My sanctity is God's ambition. And holy Church pours out her sighs to God when praying for saints. And souls are praying with her, waiting for saints. Oh! why, then, am I not a saint, as I have wished for nothing else? Evidently, grace encounters obstacles in me incompatible with sanctity.—I know it well: the obstacle is *self*. When I shall have ceased to act for self I shall be a saint. God takes wonderful pains in directing me to that goal. Vicissitudes, trials, sickness—the whole work of his hand wrought in me tends to make me say: "No, no more of self: God alone." God is so *great,* I am so *little*. Ah! how I would fain forget and despise self! Lord Jesus, let me confide it to You: I love everything that lessens and lowers me, with a love of the will; for You have made me for truth, and the truth is that I am nothing. As You know, Jesus, I am ill at ease when I feel myself elevated, and in spite of my natural repugnance I am satisfied when abased.

My sweet Master, abase me; make me very little, an utter nothing, especially in my own eyes. Grant that I may make no display of anything, especially of thy graces or of my sufferings. May this little Heaven in which we are together, this Heaven in which You give to me and I to You, may this remain solitary. May it be an "enclosed garden." Grant that to my superiors I may always have an occasion to say something that may humble me, when I have to speak of the astonishing graces I am continually

receiving. Simplify me, O Lord, in everything and always.

Oh! if I but knew there was a desert somewhere on earth in which one might live without offending God, sick and weak as I am I would drag myself to it, if need be on both knees!

. . . And remember, my soul, I have thanked God for the paralysis which removes from me every occasion of sin, and I have said: "Take, my God, my eyes, my ears, my voice, my arms, my legs. . . . Take all, provided that You guard my heart." Our Mother General has permitted and advised this abandonment. And as I shall not always be able to say it with my tongue or with my pen, I protest here, and I should willingly write it in my blood, that for the whole process of crucifixion You have wrought in me, aided by your grace and your tender love, O my God, I can only send up a cry of joy and gratitude, and that from the depth of my infirmity I should wish to sing day and night the *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* Yes, I should like to forget self in such wise that both body and soul would disappear in the brightness of your glory, and that I should sing with the Church, *"Gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam!"* [1]

O my God, I love You! *Laudetur Jesus Christus! Mihi absit gloriari!* [2]

October 8.

Our Lord does not so greatly reproach me on the score of *exterior* poverty. He knows that does not cost me much and that I am fond of

[1] We give Thee thanks for thy great glory.
[2] Jesus Christ be praised! Far be it from me to glory.

being surrounded with marks of poverty. What He wants of me is a poverty of *dependence*. (I just remember having given away a picture and taken a candle-end without permission, and I feel a deep remorse for it.) Our Lord wants me to rejoice in being poor in strength, poor in external goods, poor in power of action, being obliged to beg always the aid of others.

. . . You know well, my God, that thinking of Your holy presence does not fatigue me, and that what does fatigue me is to be occupied with myself. You know that Your action upon my soul is wonderfully gentle—is scarcely felt, so supernatural is it. All that I know is that You are acting; and for the rest, my soul enjoys an infinite calm, like that of some great deep basking in the sunlight. Lord, in writing on such high themes I ask myself if I am not guilty of a monstrous act of pride. For, is it possible that You can have chosen *me* to be the center of your attentions, me who do nothing for You and who cannot even suffer for You? Our Lord seems to answer this by saying: "I have chosen you in my mercy; for out of this vessel of iniquity I mean to make a vessel of election." . . .

. . . I have just written my election. It is abandonment to God's action, the abandonment of a victim in a sacrifice, but still more the joyous abandonment of the spouse giving herself to her Beloved. In moments of special grace vouchsafed me I feel as though our Lord had taken possession of my entire being. It is the renewal of the grace received on the night of my vows. Yes, and if I go further back, it is the grace of the 22nd of September, 1895: "Mary gives herself to Jesus and Jesus gives

Himself to Mary." Further back still, it is the grace of the 28th of June, 1891. And, to trace it to the beginning, it is the grace of my first communion. Oh! to be possessed by our Divine Lord! And so to be his that one cannot be more so!

. . . And his liberty, how Jesus crucified it for me! *Nailed* to the cross, where He must remain immovable! On my knees, before that bloody cross I have made the sacrifice of my spirit of independence. I have prayed ardently to be able to conquer it; and for that I have asked our Lord for at least one drop of his blood.

And when I consider Jesus utterly abased, contemned, covered with ignominy, oh! how I thank Him for the slight taste He has given me of his chalice! What happiness I feel in the malady that effaces and destroys me! O my Master, be You glorified in my abasement! To You all glory; to me oblivion. My Father, I love You!

October 11.

Quam sordet terra![1] No, my God, no! How fair is earth, when I can glorify You there! Saving one soul, procuring for one soul eternal glory, that should make it worth while remaining on earth till the day of judgment.

I have joy to overflowing in my tribulation! First, because I procure for Jesus, so divinely amiable, a ray of accidental glory; in the second place, I may by my sufferings win eternal glory for at least one soul! Oh! one soul saved! One soul saved!

[1] How vile the earth (as compared with Heaven)!—*St. Ignatius.*

It is folly for any one to say he will be satisfied with the lowest place in Paradise. How differently he will think one day when his eyes are opened to the light. Let us mount up, my soul; let us travel to the end of the rough path that lies before us. The higher and further we travel the more shall we glorify God. Let us not fear the ills that beset us. *Laus Deo!* [1] Look and see; raise your eyes even to Heaven's summit, whence your sweet Jesus is looking down upon you. The crown is even now in his hands; He is adorning it with precious gems; and the more He loves you the more occasion He gives you to merit those treasures by humiliations and sufferings.

Sursum corda! O Mary, begin for me now my eternal *Magnificat!* Our days upon earth, sad and painful as they seem, oh! how delicious, how beautiful they are since God is glorified by our combats and our sufferings!

After reading the above, no one will be astonished to learn that the superiors of Marie de l'Agnus Dei were convinced that her death was not far distant. Accents such as these belong to eternity, and those who use them on earth must have caught them in echoes from above. Yes, this retreat was the last; it was also the first, for Heaven itself would seem to have opened and to have shed its own light on these pages and to have filled them with its own note of triumph. Earthly ties were one by one dropping away from her, and ever higher and more undeviating in its rapid flight the soul of Marie de l'Agnus Dei was mounting towards its God.

[1] Praise to God.

Chapter 12

The condition of our invalid was daily growing worse, and yet, as the latest consultation had left matters somewhat doubtful, it was difficult to know what kind of treatment to give her. It was decided that the last word of the medical profession must be sought and every expedient tried to arrest the progress of the disease. The superiors of the Society make it a rule to spare no pains to relieve the sick, and in the present case their care and solicitude were carried to the further limits. Thinking that the treatment of specialists in Paris might better meet the conditions of the case, they granted permission to Marie-Anne's family to take her from Bordeaux to the *rue de Naples* in the capital. The journey was a long and painful one. The poor child could now scarcely move without infinite difficulty whilst the taking of food cost her many a painful effort, and speaking was next to an impossibility. Those who saw her alighting from the train in her black traveling costume, and with her thin, drooping, emaciated figure, could scarcely help thinking that her days were numbered. There are many sad days in every one's calendar, but few are as sad as those on which one must look on quite helplessly as the dearest of friends is traveling toward the grave.

Every possible means was employed to cheat death of its victim, though she herself had willingly resigned herself to its power. She was submitted to examination by a specialist for nervous diseases. Certainty was sought

and certainty was obtained; but oh! how cruel was that certainty! For, whilst the celebrated physician succeeded in eliminating all influence of neurosis from the case, at the same time he pronounced the condition of the patient to be past recovery. Another specialist was consulted, but he only confirmed the diagnosis of the first,—except that he added, by way of tempering the severity of his pronouncement: "In these very rare cases, I have sometimes seen electricity afford a little relief. After a little while we may use it with some effect. Meanwhile, the patient must rest and not be allowed to suffer from cold." And thus it was discovered that all the resources of human science could afford Marie de l'Agnus Dei only a slight alleviation of her sufferings.

All hesitation and all groping about for methods of cure were now at an end. There was an end, too, of all previous impressions regarding the sufferer. The tables were completely turned. She who had so long been regarded as a neurotic, devoid of all will-power, was in reality a victim, undergoing a long and lingering immolation, because she had willed it.

Our poor little religious was given a well-warmed room, in which she had the special services of a sister infirmarian. She had the most careful nursing and members of the community lavished upon her their attentions and cheered her by their visits; and she was not long in the house before it was remarked that her extraordinary sufferings were more than matched by extraordinary virtues. She had but a few months more to live, but they were comparatively pleasant ones. Such is often God's way with us, for even in the midst of his rigors his infinite mercy is not wanting. The soul, before taking the last step that brings it to God, the soul

that He has singled out to be tried and to be crushed "as the grain is crushed under the millstone" is allowed a moment's repose. It has all but quit the earth, its voice is all but heard among angelic choirs, but as yet it has not taken its place above. Mysterious moments, these, in which God, satisfied with the gifts offered Him by his creature, finds their measure sufficiently full, and before bestowing upon the soul its wonderful recompence, silently finishes in it work which only his eyes can recognize as unfinished. Of all the secrets of the supernatural life this is perhaps the most incomprehensible; for, as we are sinners, we understand in some way the redemption from sin, and we understand even how the divine justice should require that pure souls should "fill up," to use the astonishing expression of Saint Paul, "those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ"; but to understand the union of God with a soul even while it is on earth, to understand what it implies and what purity it exacts, that is something we cannot attain except very imperfectly. Souls called to anything like a high degree of this divine union are wont to feel it better than they can understand it, and are powerless to describe it. It should not astonish us, therefore, if we are unable to trace, or even to divine, its operation or its progress. Those who believe in God's love for mankind reverence these hidden splendors and piously look for a reflection of them in the words and acts of those souls who have attained to a complete immolation of themselves. In their words we hear the voice of Christ, in their actions we see Him operating, in their hearts we all but hear the beating of that great Heart which has saved the world. *Christianus alter Christus.*[1] Happy

[1] A Christian is another Christ.

the souls that realize this great truth before their transformation in eternity. This is why we are careful to gather together all the last letters of our saintly religious. Written nearly all of them in Paris, they will bring us close to her last days on earth.

Paris, Christmas, 1900.

My Darling Catherine:

What do you think this year of our sweet Christmas rejoicings, truly *ours* in days gone by, if you remember? I hope the Infant Jesus has spoken to your heart, not perhaps sensibly and deliciously (that is not necessary or always useful), but forcibly and sweetly, in a way to beget generosity and courage. No doubt, you have often meditated, as I have, on how our Blessed Lady and dear Mother spent the first Christmas Day. Seeing her Son and her God so little, must she not have had an immense desire to become herself as little as was possible. And how she must have been penetrated with that child spirit which is so dear to the Heart of Jesus,—a spirit of abandonment, total, perfect, unlimited, into the arms of a sweet Providence? —a spirit that makes one feel both one's own feebleness and the greatness of our Father in Heaven, as well as his omnipotence, which sustains us and gives us something of its own efficacy. And how she must have increased in generosity and in the desire to devote herself, after the model of Jesus, to the salvation of souls. Let us imitate her, my dear Catherine, and let us seek at the Crib what Jesus would have us find there—a love and imitation of her virtues.

After all, what would it profit us to live if we did not seek to resemble our dear Lord? His life is our way, for there is no other way by which to reach Heaven. The Epistles of Saint Paul are filled with this conformity with Jesus Christ and with the necessary union of Christians with Christ. The *Imitation* speaks of nothing else. The lives of all the Saints are but a following in the footsteps of the Divine Master; and all our beatitude in Heaven will proceed from our being the members of the great body of which Christ is the Head and to which He communicates the delights of his divinity.

Paris, January 1, 1901.

My Dear Little Yvonne:

The peace of Jesus! I believe I owe you, as usual, an answer to many letters, and I will make an attempt to answer them by telling you how many good wishes I send up to Heaven for you, hoping that our Lord may enable you to realize your desires, if it is possible, and give you the grace to prepare yourself worthily, in confidence and hope, to be one day united with Him.

Keep your heart for Him, in the midst of the world's rejoicings. You can never set too much store upon preserving it pure and stainless, —that heart whose love our Lord deigns to seek. Earth's trifles glitter and make a great hubbub about us, but they vanish in dust, and it is from this dust that the heart is to be preserved.

Amid the numerous objects that require your attention and care, keep your intention pure;

seek neither self nor anything the world can give. Keep our Lord steadily in view and contemn all that passes in a day, which, though transient, may leave the soul cold and inert and turn its gaze earthward, if it be allowed any headway.

I suppose you give some attention to our nephews. It is a great mission, and if you will, you can learn many useful things from it. In a house so full as yours there must be many occasions of self-denial. Don't forget that your title of future Réparatrice commits you to a rôle of self-devotedness and generosity, and that if, when there is so much daily friction, you must apply some oil to the wheels, that, too, is a part of your task, though it may cost you some effort.

Paris, January 27, 1901.

. . . As you tell me you believe you have need, now more than ever, of something to lean upon, I shall offer you the aid of my own vigorous arm! What I do chiefly for you is to recommend you to our Lord and ask Him to make you what He Himself would have you be, that is to say, one who is a realization of *his ideal.* What better could I ask for you? I thought of you this morning as I was reading this sentence in the Epistle: *"Pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris."* . . . I don't know if you have ever thought of the force of these words: "Let the peace of Christ leap with joy in your hearts." This sentence of Saint Paul expresses all my desires, in your behalf. Peace, a calm mastery over the lower nature, over what Saint Teresa calls the kitchen-court of the soul.

We must mount to the upper stories, and these are reached and held possession of by prayer. *Pax!* Why be troubled? Abandon! Abandon! God is not in the storm or in the earthquake. This was true in the time of the Prophet Elias: it is perhaps truer in our time. But this peace must rejoice, must expand in joy. The word *exultet* expresses joy in its outward signs, and that is why our Lord says to his Apostles, *"Gaudete et exultate,"* for the two words are not synonymous, as they may seem to be. *Gaudete* refers to that deep interior joy which dwells in the heart that loves God in very truth; but it must show itself in the exterior. There is perhaps nothing more imperatively required of all true Christians, for it calls for a generous exercise of many virtues,—we might say of all the virtues. But at the same time, this joy seems to be the natural accompaniment of the practice of those virtues. Its growth is best fostered by that simple, loving and generous courage with which one gives all to God. The atmosphere of virtue is the hothouse in which joy grows and puts forth its blossoms. May, then, the peace of Christ leap with joy in your heart, dearest sister! I am writing to you what our Lord is setting down under my pen, without premeditation, or even meditation. I must leave it to Him also to make it a little useful to you, —which is the whole desire of my heart, which loves you in Him.

Paris, Easter, 1901.

Two words only,—unfortunately,—but I must at all events send you my *Alleluia!* My wish to you is that you may have nought in

you but Jesus, and that you may live for Him and by Him. That is the way to be always happy and to be able to move tranquilly amidst things that pass, without letting the heart be entangled and even torn by them. It is only Heaven that is everlasting. Let us go thither in peace, in love, in patience. Suffer we surely must, but without Good Friday there is no Easter, without the *Crucifige* there is no *Alleluia.*

So, then, let us preserve a uniform serenity of soul, by means of a tranquil energy. A flower tossed by every breeze lets fall the dew of heaven; but the calm lily, resting firmly on its stem, preserves its dew, is nurtured by it, and is radiant with its luster.

A Dieu, my dear lily. Be a rose if you will, but without the thorns.

Wholly yours in Jesus triumphant,

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

Paris, Easter, 1901.

. . . I am always pretty much the same. The fine weather, which returned this morning, will, no doubt, do me some good. We must follow in the wake of the liturgy and soar aloft in Paschal Time. Every one is so kind to me that I am afraid I am having my Paradise on earth. This is my feast-day in religion, and I am very much touched by the charity of my sisters in religion. Mother Assistant does not fear she is robbing the good God by bringing me some delicious flowers which have a double perfume, that which God has given them naturally and that which they have acquired by passing a day near the tabernacle. My room is quite em-

balmed. I have never had anything so luxurious, even in the days of my greatest vanities! Our Lord, who took for Himself the sapless thorns, is making them blossom for me.

Paris, April 28, 1901.

. . . You will be obliged to give more of yourself, but you know that "they who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength"; and it is God Himself who does three fourths and a half of what we do for Him. Try and see how pleasant ought to be the path by which He is leading you, however painful it may seem. It ought, by rights, to be pleasant, for it is leading you to eternal happiness. Pleasant paths, I assure you, are hardly those of the friends of Jesus. How can we fail to see this when we press our crucifixes? It costs nature something to be always having to do what we do not like; but it is in generous acceptance, in the determined *yes* of the will, that the soul has its triumph. Oh! if we could only see the soul mounting upward with every cross accepted with a smile of contentment (at least through one's tears), we should rejoice exceedingly. God sees it, and that suffices. As for us, let us be abased, blinded, destroyed, in our own eyes, and let us keep for ourselves the *Amen* that fortifies and the *alleluia* that raises us above ourselves. Let us pray! Let us pray! Saying all to our Lord, without books, without methods, without any rule save that of a humble and courageous love—this is the secret of graces innumerable. . . .

We must hear our Lord telling us, and all

the world telling us,—we must read it in all creatures, in all events, as if everything we had to do with cried out to us: "Patience and courage, *sustine, sustine!*"

Paris, May 19, 1901.

My Dear Mamma:

I believe this letter will reach you when you are taking leave of your dear Yvonne, and I am writing to tell you how near I am to you, in thought and in prayer, sharing with you, both the pain you feel in relinquishing her and the joy you feel in giving her to God. I feel that in her case as in mine it is the *Magnificat* that will rise from your heart to your lips,—a *Magnificat* that may be mingled with tears but which will be all the more beautiful as heard by the angels. And how beautiful a thing it is to give one's children thus to the good God! This will not be so clear to us till we are in Heaven, though even here we can have some little understanding of it, and we are certain that if it is a great blessing for those who dedicate themselves, it is no less so for those who accept and will the sacrifice, and coöperate in it with their whole heart. The sacrifice of Yvonne will mean many graces for you, my dear Mamma, and our Lord will come again and fill up this second place left void. We shall pray much for you, both of us.

On Sunday I saw Uncle and Aunt X. They were charming. When they left they were persuaded that I was going to get well, because, as they said, my eye was bright and my complexion fresh. Alas! I shall have to get very sick to have a less wicked look!

To the Reverend Mother General.

Paris, May 28, 1901.

Dear Very Reverend Mother:

I have delayed too long to write and tell you how exceedingly grateful I am for the favor of your admitting my dear sister Yvonne to be numbered among your children, although my own example is so little encouraging and I am doing no more for our dear Society than giving it trouble. I hope that by God's favor she will resemble me in nothing and that in self-devotedness she may fill the place of two. She is all good will and is much more solid than I in every respect. I shall beg our Lord to give her all the strength that I should wish to possess and to make of her a humble and generous Réparatrice, who will afford you much consolation, dear Very Reverend Mother.

I must also thank you, and from the bottom of my heart, for your kindness in writing to me during the spring. I cannot describe to you, dear Mother, how much good it has done me. Your words of encouragement and your blessing have given me incalculable help in the endurance of the little sufferings incident to my condition. Oh! my dear Mother, how kind you are to the least and most useless of your children. What can she do to thank you? You know with what fervor I offer to God for you and for the Society the state in which I am; but that seems to me little enough, and I am ever so desirous of doing more, and especially of sanctifying myself, in order thus to give some value to my idleness.

Permit me in closing, Very Reverend Mother, to tell you how deeply I have been touched by

the kindness shown me here. My one fear is that I am too happy here. Mother Superior, who is so supernatural and so devoted to our Lord's interest, has been a source of untold blessings to me. I may say the same of Mother X; and in all my sisters I find edification and help. I say to myself daily and with increasing conviction that I am a hundred times over unworthy to live in the Society and in the company of such souls.

Hence, I place myself at your knees, dear Mother, hoping that in blessing me you will change me a little and assuring you that I am most happy to be, in spite of all, in the number of your children.

Have the goodness to accept, Very Reverend Mother, the expression of the deep respect with which I am,

Your Obedient and Devoted,
Child in Our Lord.

Paris, June 7, 1901.

Dearest Mamma:

The peace of Jesus! I did not write to you last Sunday as I left it to Teresa to tell you all about me, as I suppose she has done. I hope to see you in three weeks or so, when you come to take Françoise, whom I am so glad to have with me. I hope, for this once, I shall be rid of my plaques and batteries which the doctor is applying most assiduously. The Divine Master is not pleased to make this remedy more effective than the others. But it matters little. I assure you that I feel more and more the need of resigning myself like a little child to the tender hand of the good God. In Heaven we

shall bless the work wrought by this malady, because there we shall know the secrets of the divine process. Let us, then, begin on earth the *Magnificat* of eternity. Now that Yvonne is going to be the arms and the legs, I can all the better be the *heart,* which prays and loves and suffers. Our Mother General cheers and encourages me wonderfully. She has been here a few days, together with Reverend Mother Provincial.

A Dieu, my dear Mamma. I must take leave of you now, to write to Yvonne, who has not had a word from me since she became my sister in religion. But I get some fine letters from her. She makes a great effort to be correct and address me as *vous* and *ma Mère;* but she often forgets herself, and the result is a funny mixture of *vous*'s and *tu*'s, frequently in the same sentence. I am going to try and do better, but I am not so sure of succeeding.

To Yvonne:

You must think my silence astonishing and feel that I am very indifferent to all your great doings of late, important as they are. Nothing of the kind: if I have waited to write it is only because I wanted to see what turn affairs were going to take and write accordingly. I have been praying fervently for you, first of all, at the moment of your departure, and then during your days of solitude at Pau, which I imagined would come hard to you. After the great sacrifice there is need of flinging oneself without any hesitation into action and self-devotion, and of not allowing the mind to dwell upon what has been given up, while as yet it does not know

all that it has gained. But God is ever at hand. Without another thought, let us cast all the turmoil of our hearts into the Heart of Jesus. If you are assailed by weariness or regrets during the retreat or during the first days of your postulancy,—and you may be,—forget *yourself*, and casting your eyes upon our Lord, say with earnestness: "It is not for *my* sake, but for God's, that I am here. Should it be the death of me, I should be a thousand times happy for having come here." I assure you, the Demon will flee, and peace and joy will return. The further you advance in the religious life the more will you feel its happiness. It is a happiness of which nothing in the world can give an idea. It is very compatible with great and real sufferings, but it is so profound that, no matter how much havoc the cross may work in our hearts, this seed of true joy will but grow and increase the more. All the Saints have suffered, yet even in this life they have been what they are now—the *Blessed*.

Paris, June 14, 1901.

It is a long time since I wrote to you, but I have never ceased praying for you, as you indeed divine. To-day, the Feast of the Sacred Heart (one of the dearest of feasts to me), I am asking that Heart to teach you better and better its two great virtues, meekness and humility. These, He tells us, are the virtues He wishes to teach us. And He assures us if we learn them well that his yoke will be sweet and his burden light. Let us, then, take our places in the school of the Divine Master. In this science, as in others, the first lessons are often a

little difficult, and it will take a long time to learn to be able to retain them; but the more we know the more we shall want to know, for there is nothing so attractive as Jesus, nothing so winsome as his lessons.—Courage and patience are the key to all sanctity. Every instant we must re-animate ourselves. *Courage* is the word—*never give up!* Shoulder the burden, keep on advancing, be firm!

Paris, July 7, 1901.

. . . I am very prosaically spending Mother Superior's feast-day in bed, as I do other days. I champ the bit a little; but why so? Is it not better to sacrifice our feasts here below, in order to merit the enjoyment of incomparable ones above and to obtain for poor sinners the grace to enjoy them one day?

Yvonne writes me letters all-radiant with happiness and showing also that she has gone generously to work. Her entrance has been hailed with joy in our charitable and loving Society. Her coming was awaited with impatience by my little sisters of the novitiate, to whom I had so often spoken of her. I am very much touched by all the congratulations I receive from all quarters. Our Very Reverend Mother General, who is here, is kind beyond all comparison. If I could only give X into her hands forthwith. But how much prudence and delicacy and, above all, prayer is needed to catch this little fish on God's fishing-line!

Dearest Sister:

The peace of Jesus: I begin by wishing you with all my heart a good and holy feast, beg-

ging your holy patron to obtain for you his own ardent love of God, and many things which will constitute your happiness in this world and in the other. *I* was no less happy to see *you* in Paris. I only regret that the visit was so short and that we did not get a bit deeper in our conversation. I should have had many things to say to you: to say them by letter is not exactly the same thing.—It seems to me, my dear, that you have not at all understood the condition in which God has placed me, and that you might easily put *your* spirit in the place of *his.* (Let us beware of this.) There is no suffering involved in active labors comparable to that arising from inaction; for in action, nature nearly always finds a little satisfaction, but in idleness, impotence, uselessness, there is none. You have not calculated (you scarcely could do so) what a number of sacrifices of all sorts are bound up with physical suffering when it ripens into a chronic infirmity. The *heart,* of which you speak, is not spared more than the rest. So, in a word, you need not feel uneasy about me. God wills for his Réparatrices that which serves best for *reparation;* and in my case He has known how to find the sensitive spot, and the touch of his finger does not, after all, miss the wound. Let us adore his work and let Him accomplish it. In saying all this I am not posing as a victim, which would be a false attitude indeed, but I wish to correct a judgment which has been a bit hasty and superficial and savors of a self-reliant habit.

If you recall well what we were saying, you should trust a little less to self-direction, as you would often run the risk of deceiving your-

self. However intelligent or enlightened one may be, or suppose himself to be, one is always in the dark regarding himself. Consider, then, as a grace and profit by the direction of Père X. Tell him everything and ask him to prescribe a mode of behavior in regard to all the principal matters. Your progress will soon become much more rapid, as you will not have to grope about to find your path. The next thing is to pray; but let it be prayer of the heart. As you yourself so well remarked to me, fine thoughts are not of so great account. I would give much to see our Lord teach you the secret of true prayer. All manner of blessings lie concealed in it. Hence, one of my most frequent petitions for you is that you may master this prayer of the heart, intimate and penetrating as it is, winning every grace and transforming life. I know full well that it supposes many other things and that it is one of the greatest graces God bestows; but we can do nothing without prayer; we cannot correct a single defect without it; and praying is not the reciting of forms of words.— And now, when you pray, ask the good God to give you a heart filled with charity, a heart more inclined to excuse than to condemn, and averse to *fixing its attention* upon defects which it cannot help *seeing*. If God judged us as we judge others, what would become of us? Be amiable, be kind, be charitable; and to that end don't think yourself perfect in anything; but, forgetting your own good qualities, try to see those of others and shut your eyes to their defects. When you have got that far, you will have gained much, and you will be much the happier. You know, our Lord regards as done

to Himself what we do to others, good or evil.

A Dieu, my dear little sister. Pray for me, and write to me often.

Let us seek one another *in Corde Jesu.*

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

The very imperfect sketch we have been giving of a soul so truly devoted to reparation will need some additional touches to show us what Marie de l'Agnus Dei was in the last months of her life. More retired than ever in the quiet of a cell which she was seldom able to leave, she was the edification of the large and fervent community of Paris. Her Superior wrote after her death:—

I cannot forget the mingled respect and affection with which she received my visits, or the gratitude she evinced for the time, relatively short, which I was able to devote to her. Her one great happiness was to think and speak of our Lord and of spiritual things. Her interior life was intense and her union with God very great—continual, I imagine; and that is the reason why solitude never in the least weighed heavily upon her.—There were times, however, when she was tried by temptation and suffered the withdrawal of sensible devotion; but her will remained fixed in God; and, notwithstanding the fluctuation of feeling to which she was subject, the disposition of her will was always of the same tenor, so great was the maturity of her virtue. God had given her in a high degree the spirit of immolation, and she felt continually drawn to reparation. Once, when she received

a piece of bad news ominous for the cause of religion,—the passing of the fatal law, I believe,—she exclaimed: "And the good God does not take me! . . . Still, I offer myself . . . offer myself . . . offer myself. . . . *How* must I offer myself that He may accept me at last?" She had not long to wait before being heard.

Another superior who happened to be in Paris a month before the death of Marie-Anne writes of her:—

I did not know her, but I once chanced to be near her in a tribune. This religious, so young and suffering so much, attracted me by her amiability and her heavenly countenance, and on leaving the chapel I asked who she was.

A Mother who was ill like herself and who was unable to take part in the exercises of the community, said of her:—

I had permission to go and take a little recreation with her. I no sooner saw her than her charming smile gladdened my heart. Even while enduring the most cruel sufferings, when I would ask her how she was she would answer, "I am very well." She felt, indeed, always well in fulfilling the will of God, and it was only to the infirmarian that she told her physical condition. When I wished to have some words written on a picture I would go to her room, and she was always ready to oblige, although she had so much trouble in moving her poor fingers.

An incident which occurred earlier throws much light on her amiable disposition and her eagerness to give pleasure.

A Mother under whom she had been in some capacity at Le Mans received notice of a change of residence, to take place on the following day. During recreation she noticed Marie de l'Agnus Dei, who was sketching with a pen a *Mater Dolorosa* with much eagerness of manner. "For whom are you working so busily?"—"For the one who is going to-morrow. . . . I want her to carry away with her a souvenir of the house she is leaving." It was a pleasure to her to multiply such delicate attentions, trifles in themselves, but none the less touching to those who received them. How many of her sisters have said, "When I received the habit, when I took my vows, when I was changed to another house, Mother Marie de l'Agnus Dei gave me a picture with so sweet a smile and with such pleasant words that I have always kept the picture in remembrance of her."

An aged religious who had been a member of the Society from the earliest days and had known the Mother Foundress said of Marie-Anne:—

> Our dear little sister had a real cult for everything that concerned the Society. She loved to hear it spoken of as a child loves to hear its mother praised. She never tired of listening to an account of its beginnings and of the ways in which God protected it. When the community went to the garden for the evening recreation, as I was unable to go there I went upstairs to see Marie de l'Agnus Dei, whom I always found with the same sweet smile. We soon began to speak of the Society, and she would ask me again and again to give her some details of the life of our venerated Mother Foundress. She could scarcely speak, but she listened with in-

tense interest, giving meanwhile no intimation of her sufferings, cruel as they were, but pressing her crucifix with both hands and regarding with an expression of profound gratitude the Saviour who had called her to this dear Society.

She was, of course, amiable and kind toward the sister who took care of her. As the latter could not write, she asked Mother Marie de l'Agnus Dei to become her secretary. Thereafter, notwithstanding the difficulty she had in holding her pen, she was always ready, of her own accord, to write the sister's letters. For *her* she was never occupied, never fatigued. When the Superior's feast-day came around, Mother Marie de l'Agnus Dei called the sister, who came to her in haste. "Well, my dear Mother, what is it? Do you wish me to dress you?"—"No, no, it is I who am going to dress you to-day. I thought you would not have a picture to send to our Mother, and I have made this one for you."

The same sister infirmarian having once called herself the unworthy child of one of the first superiors, to whom she was speaking, the Mother, happening to be in Marie de l'Agnus Dei's room, asked the sister why she so designated herself, and then, putting her arm around the little patient's neck, added: "And she! is she not my worthy child? oh! yes, my worthy child!"

Another day the same sister came to her patient and said to her: "Well, dear Mother, what will you have for dinner?"—"What will I have? You ask me what I will have . . . but *will* and *will not* have no place in our rules. Bring me whatever you wish. The one word in our rules is obedience."

"Before her great illness," writes a superior, "she never spoke of her health. It was by her handwriting

that I discovered the progress of her disease. As I had a chance to observe her during the two years of her probation, I got to know intimately this beautiful soul and saw how rough was the path in which the Lord was pleased to have her walk, sustaining her by His grace whilst refusing her all sensible consolation. She once wrote to me: 'The good God has taken from me both arms and legs, but ever since, I have been living under a blue sky: help me to thank Him.' On another occasion this feeling is still more accentuated: 'I have never been so happy as since the good God deprived me of tongue, arms and legs. Must I not have been bad when the good Master was obliged to employ such means of correcting me?' "

It was always one of her severest trials that she was incapable of rendering active service to the Society. She felt it to the last day of her life. But she was all the more ingenious in finding ways to be useful in little things. She sketched and painted pictures, and was always happy to learn of any profit that was derived from them. She contrived to make a collection of foreign stamps, and we remember how glad she was when a rare stamp one day realized ten francs.

Her patience was angelic, no one ever hearing from her a complaint, or a regret, or even a desire. She placed herself in others' hands with an entire abnegation of self, receiving everything with gratitude, returning most hearty thanks, and asking for nothing. Her Superior, on learning that on several occasions she had borne in silence the want of certain things, was obliged to give her an express order to notify others when, by mistake or through inadvertence, she did not receive what she needed.

As it was almost impossible for her to masticate her food, she had to be served daily with finely hashed meat; and when she was once asked if she was not tired of seeing, day after day, the same little portion come, she answered: "Oh! I scarcely think of it; and, besides, as I am unable to practice penance, I must at least not act the gourmand."

She never left her room except to go down to the tribune, for Mass and communion. As soon as Mass was over she slowly retraced her steps, supported on the arm of the nursing-sister. It was enough to see her pass along in the deepest recollection to have a sense of the near presence of Jesus, who had made her soul his special abode. She seemed to be rapt beyond her actual surroundings and to be living above the earth.—And yet, when any one came to see her she received her visitor sweetly and graciously and was interested in everything, though she showed an unvarying calmness and serenity of soul.—It must have been about this time that she penned the following note, bearing no date, which shows how faithful she was in the practice of mortification:—

> Not long ago, something was served me at meals which made me feel a great deal of disgust. Our Lord asked me to conquer my repugnance and eat; which I did immediately. At the same moment it seemed to me (without my seeing or feeling anything exteriorly) that the water from the side of Jesus, flowing upon my soul in an abundant stream, purified and refreshed it. I heard our Lord say to me with much love: *"Vulnerasti Cor meum in uno crine colli tui."* [1]

[1] Thou hast wounded my heart with one hair of thy neck.—*Cant. of Cant.*

I felt extreme confusion and humiliation at the thought of God's generosity compared with the little I had ever offered Him, and at the same time a desire to be more faithful in the future.

When a soul has mounted to such a height and its union with God is so continual, it is not surprising that it has now only one aspiration, which is to destroy whatever yet remains of self and to live no longer but in the Infinite. The last page of the journal from which we have drawn so largely will now be given, and it seems to us a fitting close to the series of notes we have been taking from this source. What, indeed, could be added to it? It begins with the annihilation of self, and it may be said to have no end, as it loses itself in eternity.

May 23, 1901.

He must increase, I must decrease.[1]—O Jesus, I submit to the work that is being wrought in me by your hand, in all its details. I accept my cross, my poverty, my utter abasement. But, more than all this, I wish to love You and make others love You, and that in the highest degree possible to creatures.

Here I am: it is a simple acquiescence in God's will to destroy and a coöperation in his twofold action: that which brings me to nought and that which raises Jesus Christ on my ruins. Without thinking that I am of any account because I have been chosen for the sacrifice, without any parading of any such terms as "victim" or "immolated soul," I should have the spirit of what is indicated by them.—A complete sacri-

[1] St. John the Baptist, in reference to Christ.

fice, first of all in accepting quite simply all physical suffering, being persuaded more and more that I am just a pain-producing machine; in the second place, not revolting against suffering in the moral order, such as aridity, a feeling of helplessness, a paralysis of the faculties in dealing with God. Here, too, I must be simple, do what I can and not be distressed at my poverty. Spirit of sacrifice in all the details of my life, in desires, attractions, affections . . . seeing them contradicted, estranged, and all without revolt, in peace, and as far as possible with joy.—Oh! yes, rejoicing at everything that rids me of some part of myself and placing my whole being beneath God's hand, that He may to the full operate in it according to his good pleasure.

A state, therefore, of simple and complete abandonment of all to God; yes, and something beyond this, namely, a sinking of self and a keeping of God alone in view. . . . Oh! what interior graces I have by reason of my exterior condition! What facility in dealing directly with God, in an atmosphere of continual prayer and ceaseless intercourse with Heaven. "Our thoughts hold commerce with Heaven!" It is only in this way that I shall be useful to the Society, to souls.—I must become entirely supernatural; I must live no more save by faith; I must make my own life a source of life to a great number of souls. This is *my* mission. But I must not forget that the humble alone are the channels of grace, and that I shall do good in proportion as I am destroyed and changed into our Lord.

Oh! let me plead with myself: "Let us be

humble, let us not be afraid of what brings humiliation . . . let us go and meet it."

I complain too much; I do not suffer with sufficient cheerfulness; I *look* the sufferer too much. There is a limit, it is true, to the constraint I ought to practice. Our Lord will not be astonished if I sometimes let the Mother Superior or the Father see that I am quite prostrate. But my sister religious should see nothing but joy. They have enough crosses of their own not to be burdened with mine. And it is this consideration that often prevents me from speaking in all simplicity to superiors. They have so much to suffer that I am loth to speak to them of my crosses. But they are well aware, after all, that all this is to me a happiness and a grace; and I should suppose that they, like myself, rejoice in it, in the spirit of faith. Ah! the superiors! How I should pray for them! How I should wish to comfort them, aid them . . . it has long been my heart's desire to be their joy. . . . To be so I must become a saint —that suffices.

A saint! Can I become one still? Yes, and it is to that end that all is being wrought in me. O Jesus, help me to become one,—humbly, painfully, patiently, but in very truth. There is no other prospect held out to me. All human hope, all natural happiness, all earthly expectations, have disappeared. Jesus alone stands out before my vision,—He, the divine Ideal, ravishingly beautiful beneath the wounds that cover Him . . . and He invites me to the perfect imitation of his life. . . . Oh! the inner life of Jesus! a life of boundless devotion to the interests of souls and the glory of the Heavenly

Father! It has wooed and won my soul! I have understood what Jesus wants of me, what He asks of me; and whatever it costs, *En ego, O bone Jesu, tecum in labore! tecum in cruce! tecum in terra, ut sim tecum in coelo, per infinita saecula saeculorum.. Amen.* (Behold me, O good Jesus, abiding with Thee in thy travail, with Thee on thy cross, with Thee on earth, that I may be with Thee in Heaven, for ever and ever. Amen.)

Chapter 13

Whilst Marie de l'Agnus Dei was thus suffering and praying in silence, grave events in the political world threatened to disturb the peace of soul she had so dearly purchased. It was the hour of the passing of the Law of Associations, which was to put so many religious communities upon the road to exile. The superiors of the Society did not deem it wise to keep up their establishments in France after the passing of the law. They decided to send all the French religious abroad, distributing them among the various houses of the Society in other lands. The novitiate at Toulouse, where Yvonne had just arrived, was preparing to remove to Switzerland, but as Marie de l'Agnus Dei was to go to Belgium, superiors very graciously appointed the Belgian novitiate at Tournai as the destination of her sister. Even this meant exile and separation; but the separation seemed less complete, and as they were comparatively near each other, this facilitated for both the receiving of visits from those who were dear to them. This decision was not yet known to those who were most affected by it. Up to the last day they were to remain in ignorance. The communities in France only knew in general that they were going to be dissolved, though that was enough to draw many a tear and to demand many a sacrifice. It was during these anxious days that in the community of the *rue de Naples* the Spiritual Exercises were made for the last time in French territory. It will be remembered that in the preceding year Marie de l'Agnus Dei

had written, "Next year I shall be the retreatant of eternity." And it was true, for now scarcely a month separated her from the day of her death, and besides, it was impossible for her to follow the common exercises. The Superior wished to dispense her entirely from the retreat, but the fervent religious had no such thought. She was permitted to spend this precious week alone with God. "I had barely time enough," writes the Superior, "to pay her a flying visit. When I asked her if four meditations a day would not be too fatiguing, her answer was: 'Oh! not at all: to be alone with God is rest to me; it is my soul's happiness. Oh! would that the whole of life were a retreat!' And I know," adds the Mother, "that during her solitude our Lord showered upon her very special graces."

We are loth to impose upon our readers the task of following, one by one, the series of meditations, always of the same tenor, forming the basis of a retreat. We shall presume no further than to draw from the retreatant's notes, which were penned with difficulty by a fast-failing hand, some thoughts of a more personal interest. They exhibit the last flights Heavenward of this angelic soul and her final contemplation through an earthly veil of Him whom she was so soon to behold face to face. Who will tell us the secrets of such perfect prayer? Who will say what thoughts visited that soul during those precious moments when, alone with God, Marie de l'Agnus Dei looked back at her life now spent and looked forward into eternity. Those who had an opportunity of seeing her during those eight days remember the impression they had of something very heavenly that was passing in her soul. It must have been during these days that she wrote the following prayer:—

O crucified Jesus, prostrate in spirit at the foot of thy holy cross, I accept once more the share of suffering Thou hast appointed for me, and I offer to Thee again the sacrifice of my whole being, exterior and interior, in order that Thou mayest dispose of it for thy greater glory and according to thy good pleasure. I protest from the bottom of my heart, O my good Master, that I no longer wish or desire aught else than that Thou mayest continue the work Thou has begun in me, and that I now renounce in advance every desire and every petition that may be opposed to its accomplishment. I acknowledge the wisdom, the holiness and the mercy that appear in all thy dealings with my soul, and I adore Thee and bless Thee in all. I implore Thee by all thy sufferings in this life not to permit me to act otherwise than in unison with Thee, but rather to grant me the grace of seconding thy action by annihilating myself more and more. Grant, my dear Jesus, that my meat and drink may be the doing of thy holy will. I beg of Thee, in place of all things else, to give me thy holy love and thy divine grace, together with perfect fidelity and a patience abiding with me to the end. Withdraw not thy presence, O Lord, lest my soul grow faint in the way. Leave me not alone, for the night is closing about my soul and wrapping me in its gloom. May thy cross be my support and the instrument of my victories and my conquests. May I live united to Thee, nailed to my cross with Thee, as long as it shall please Thee,—so that at last, my Beloved, after winning many souls to Thee and after procuring Thee as much glory as may be

possible, I may live with Thee in the possession of joy eternal, following Thee wherever Thou goest, singing the Canticle of the Lamb triumphant, after singing on earth the canticle of the Lamb offered in sacrifice.

And her soul is still more perfectly revealed in the following:—

. . . God has thrice created me: 1. He has drawn me from nothingness; 2. He has drawn me from the world; 3. He has drawn me from the active life.—Creature, Réparatrice, victim —how close are the ties that bind me to God! . . . God acts upon my soul in a way that is peculiarly direct. There is now no room in my soul for anything but Himself. The world is shut out. Grace incomparable! I seem to hear our Lord repeating to me: *"Hostiam laudis!"* [1] I would have thee be a victim of praise: trust in my omnipotence.

. . . My heart should be a conduit which nothing could penetrate. No creature must be allowed to remain in it, or those that enter it must leave it in the direction of God. Nothing, nothing for me alone—God in everything. I should not attach myself even to souls the most elevated, the most delicate, but seek God in them, and then pass on, enriched by my treasure and shunning the natural, which would rob me of it. The more tender God makes my heart, the more *absolute* the detachment He requires of me, the more exclusive his love.

. . . There are moments when God penetrates the entire soul. It is steeped in Him, more than

[1] Victim, or sacrifice, of praise.—*St. Paul* and *Pss.*

is the sponge in the sea. This is what we should ever seek, diving, as it were, into the depths,—that is to say, into the infinite Heart of God. Then will all creatures be forgotten, and self no less. The soul will be *divinised.* God will act in it, God will pray in it; it comes forth hence filled with Him. Oh! what good is done in the world by souls united to God! A word from them is worth more than a discourse.—My God, I will seek You. I have desired with all my heart to be united with You. Give me what is needed for that end, even, and especially, if it costs much to nature. *Ostende mihi faciem tuam!*[1]

. . . *Sitio!*[2] And for what, my dear Jesus, are You thirsting? It is no longer for suffering, for your thirst for it is slaked; it is no longer for opprobrium, for You are sated with it. . . . I am thirsting for your soul, for your perfection, for your sanctification. I am thirsting to see you mounting after Me to Calvary. I am thirsting to see you take my place on the cross, which I am going to leave, and suffer there, in order to finish my passion and continue the work of saving souls.

Intimately convinced that she was soon to die, she writes:—

. . . Three devotions suited as a preparation for death: To *Saint Joseph* (I have been struck by the ways in which his life is related to the one which God has chosen for me—love him the more); To the *Blessed Virgin;* To the *Heart*

[1] Show me thy face.—*Cant. of Cant.*
[2] I thirst.

of Jesus. How sweet it is to die after having had a devotion to the Heart of Him who is to be our Judge! Oh! the happy moment when I shall sink into the abyss of the Heart of Jesus!

I have noticed more than once that those who live simply die simply, causing no trouble or annoyance. An additional reason, this, for my learning to be simple. I fear, and always have feared, the moment of death. I should like to see it over and past. O Jesus, O Mary, O Joseph, I confide in your tenderness! *Maria, Mater gratiae, dulcis parens clementiae, tu nos ab hoste protege et hora mortis suscipe.*[1]

. . . From the depths of the Host our Lord is saying to me incessantly: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay thou here and watch." . . . Stay where? In the night, in the darkness, in solitude, in union with his Heart bruised for our crimes.

Our Lord knew beforehand all that He was going to suffer. No single part of his passion, with all its circumstances and its infinite depth of pain, could escape his knowledge. He wills not that I may foresee the sufferings of the morrow: I am too feeble. . . . But it *is* his will that a Réparatrice should be sure of suffering much, that she should accept it and will it and desire it, that she should thirst for it, and that, in general, she should be ready . . . that she should be prepared for *all.*

One evening during this period she was given a deeper insight than usual into the abyss of infinite beauty. Her soul rose to greater heights of contempla-

[1] Mary, Mother of grace, sweet Mother of clemency, protect us from the enemy and receive us in death's hour.—*Hymn.*

tion and entered more deeply into that ineffable union to which she was being invited. We shall let her describe in her own words what passed in her soul during that memorable hour.

> . . . Our Lord showed me the lovers of his Heart,—the saintly women so dear to me, particularly Margaret Mary, and, besides, the three little Saints, my brothers in the spirit. . . . And our Lord said to me: "Wilt thou?" A great desire sprang up in my heart. And then our Lord showed me his own Heart. I saw it filled with graces which no one has a thought of asking of Him, or rather which cannot be shed upon souls because they do not prepare themselves to receive them. I begged for them fervently.—Our Lord then asked of me a complete oblivion of myself, bidding me to abide there in peace and to live with my eyes fixed upon his Heart, with a complete surrender to his will. He promised that his generosity would be proportioned to mine and his graces to my fidelity, allowing for the difference between the Infinite and nothingness. In his mercy He made known to me that the struggle against *self* would be long, that I would be happy and He would be satisfied if self should be entirely vanquished at the moment of death. He showed me that the process of destroying it would be long and painful, and that nature would die many deaths before the last. He required me to have as my equipment for the struggle a persevering will, proof against discouragement and a certitude regarding two things: the first, that the destruction of self is absolutely impossible to my own unaided powers; the second, that the

Heart of Jesus will effect it in me if I am but faithful. He required of me as a means to this end the absence of all wilful reservation, an abandon without limit, the making of every effort in my power, and when I seem powerless, to will to remain in his presence as the victim of a holocaust, entirely given over to the fulfilment of the wishes of his Heart. He made known to me that He wished to make use of me for the good of souls.

I offered myself to bear the weight of his justice and his holiness, as his lovers have done, though I declared to Him that for this I felt I had not sufficient strength. I said to Him that I would ask Him to enable me to make the most painful sacrifices, but that I might be deceived in so doing, and hence preferred to leave all to the good pleasure of his Heart.

He produced a sort of new union between Himself and me,—one in which He was to act and I to submit. I cannot describe what took place in me. It was so deeply interior and so insensible that the soul alone could grasp its precious content. It was entirely beyond the sphere of sense, and of a depth which the soul alone could fathom.

I know that the Demon is going to make every effort to rob me of this grace. My means of preserving it is to believe in the love of the Heart of Jesus and to set generously about the task He requires of me.

He will do everything for me if I do not impede his action.

After receiving this grace, of which we shall not seek to know the price, she fervently begs for another:—

Having given me so much during this retreat, give me now, I beseech You, your Holy Spirit. . . . You deprive me of your sensible presence, You, my Lord, whom I would wish to see always so near me. But I know that You will not take back your graces. Give me, nevertheless, the Consoler, O good Jesus, the Spirit of truth, who will teach me all things.

. . . It is necessary for you that I go, for if I remained forever, the Spirit would not descend upon you. You would attach yourself to the sensible, to what sensibly touches your heart. . . . And then, what sacrifice comes hard when I am nigh? What generosity one evinces in the sweetness of my presence. Believe that my heart will never desert you. Draw from It your strength, your life. Look up to Heaven and be consoled by the thought that I, your Jesus, who have lived so painful a life for you, am crowned with glory and happiness immeasurable. If you love Me, and Me alone, your suffering will be soon consoled.

. . . *Quid retribuam?* My retreat began with abandon and it ends with abandon, but it is accompanied with still more conviction. . . . Exile, with all its consequences, is now certain. It rends the heart to see all those empty houses, all those deserted chapels. . . . Oh! it should only make us love Him all the more,—our dear Jesus, who is persecuted more than we are.—I have asked our Lord to choose for Himself hearts that shall carry Him like ostensoria and annihilate themselves in his Presence as they pay Him their tribute of adoration and love. I wish that my heart may be one of these.—O Jesus, pursued, persecuted, banished, come and repose

in me. . . . I shall be your tabernacle, your ostensorium, whilst being your victim, if You will accept the offer. Give me only your love and your grace, for that will suffice.

Finally, as she must conclude with practical resolutions, as though she were to remain some years on earth, she wrote the following beautiful paragraphs, which will show, as one of the Mothers remarked, what Jesus was to this soul and what she was to Jesus.

Omnia possum in Eo qui me confortat.[1] Our Lord wants of me the practice of an entire simplicity, which will be for me the most real expression of humility: 1. In my relations with God, by reposing in his arms with the trustfulness of a child by an absolute abandonment in regard to every disposition of his holy will and in all my dealings with Him.—2. In regard to my superiors, by showing much more abandonment, confidence, openness and sincerity, and by more of the spirit of faith.—3. In regard to my sisters, by being careful to seek God alone in all my relations with them, by keeping clear of all the subtle influences of self-love, and by being direct and sincere in my devotion to them, that they may be the better for it in our Lord.—4. In regard to myself, by an absolute repression of all vain satisfaction and self-complacency, by a sincere struggle against all that turns my thoughts to self, by a continual effort to forget myself and be absorbed in the Heart of Jesus, as He desires of me.

[1] I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.—*St. Paul.*

Our Lord requires of me two things besides: 1. The sacrifice of all satisfaction to mind or heart enjoyed entirely apart from Him. 2. Perfect fidelity in practicing all the slight mortifications which He will inspire me to perform,—avoiding, however, anything that might entail injury to health or interior trouble.

He has promised me in exchange for all this: 1. To accomplish in me his entire will. 2. To unite me intimately to his Heart. 3. To make use of me in his great work. 4. To be my help, my support, my Master in all things.

Lord, my soul has hoped in You, and You have told me that by your grace I shall do what I have promised You. Hence I trust in You and lose thought of my own helplessness in thinking of your omnipotence. Heart of Jesus, make something out of this nothingness, which leaves itself to You. . . . You know all, You can do all, Lord, and You love me!

Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo.[1]

After this retreat, Marie de l'Agnus Dei had the happiness of seeing her mother, her eldest sister, her sister Françoise and one of her young nieces, who came to embrace her before her departure for Liége. It was the last time they saw one another before that supreme reunion of Christian families which will fear no separation. The house was all but dismantled and a great number of religious were coming and going on their way from their abandoned convents to their new destinations (often at a great distance), and it was amidst the bustle and confusion which thus prevailed that our dear

[1] The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.—*Ps.*

little religious came to greet the members of her family, with her wonted smile. She had had the courage to rise and have herself dressed in order to receive them, and with the aid of another's arm she sought her mother's room, and there folding her wasted hands upon her lap and making an effort to smile and to shape a few syllables of speech, she cast a tender glance at those who were so dear to her. One morning, she drew her niece Mary to her side and placing a corner of her blue veil upon her head said to her: "See how it becomes you, Marie; it was made for you; I am going to ask the good God to make you and your sisters all Réparatrices." She would have all whom she loved follow in her own footsteps.

Marie-Anne had indeed the deepest affection for her family, but she loved them as the saints love their own, that is, in God and for eternity. She loved them, too, with a fidelity which was proof against the effects of absence, disappointment, and even sorrow itself. She loved them with the affection of those tender natures whose ardor is all the more real in that it is rarely and briefly manifested. Her affection was not evinced by great exterior demonstrations; her life was too supernatural for that; but it was plain that she carried those whom she loved continually in her heart and that her affection for them was inspired by those highest, purest and most living realities which are at the root of Christian love. She took every occasion to prove to them that her love was unchanged, and that, be it noted, in an environment which is thought by many to be devoid of tenderness and affectionate memories. For her mother's latest feast-day she conceived the idea of composing a number of canticles which she entitled

Songs of Le Patys. She set them to familiar airs and collected them into a sort of album, which she illustrated with some of the finest touches of her pencil. The first page bore a miniature picture of Le Patys, done from memory but remarkably true. Another represented, side by side (as they might have been but were destined never to be, on this earth), the two Réparatrices who had flown from the nest. A third had a picture of the church at Marans, and of the Croix-Rabault, a small place of pilgrimage much honored in the whole countryside. The whole was thus a compendious history of her heart, her infancy and her religious life. On another occasion she painted for her mother a picture in which she brought together, in as many emblems, all the members of the family; to which she added the four great objects of her earliest affections: God, the Church, France and the King. As to her father, he was everywhere in her life. Her last days were employed in an attempt to draw a portrait of him, after a photograph which she had always preserved but inspired still more by the indelible impression left upon her memory. Ever faithful to God, she was at the same time faithful to affections engendered from on high, thus realizing in one of their most beautiful significations the words of the Apostle, "Our life is hidden with Christ in God."

But her joy at seeing her mother was to be counterbalanced by a sacrifice not easily made. After Mme. Hervé-Bazin's departure Marie de l'Agnus Dei set out for Liége, and whilst the train was leaving Paris her sister Yvonne, who had just received the habit of Marie-Réparatrice, arrived in the capital, thinking to find her there. They were not to see each other here below. Both sisters felt the disappointment keenly but accepted it

generously. Marie-Anne had scarcely more than arrived in Liége when she wrote to console her sister:—

Liége, September 29, 1901.

My Very Dear Sister:

The peace of Jesus! I have received your long and fine letter. Thanks for the details it gives me. Our Lord has administered to you a severe blow and has treated you as a genuine Réparatrice. It proves that He has a special love for you and that He intends to make you travel far toward perfection, if only you are faithful. I thought on leaving Paris that we should just miss seeing each other, but then, or never, was the time to drain the chalice and to do it generously. I have been pained more by your sacrifice than by my own; for it is much harder to quit the novitiate the day after one has taken the habit than to make one's fifth change of residence, as in my case. But looking at it supernaturally, I have been glad to see how our Lord has been treating you; how He is beginning to rid your heart of all things else in order to fill it with Himself. The like consideration made me rejoice at leaving the Paris house, which I loved so much and in which I was *too* happy. The more God takes from us the more He gives of Himself. This makes us not only accept but also desire the sacrifice, as well as bless God for it, despite the groanings of nature and of the heart of flesh. Let us be generous, and never let us desire that God may treat us as faint-hearted creatures, but rather as Réparatrices.

. . . I have resumed here my mode of living at Paris,—working a little mite, suffering a lit-

tle more, praying a good deal. These last two particulars constitute my *charge,* which I have had the honor of receiving at the hands of our Very Reverend Mother herself! Quite like a superior!

I have the happiness of living in a very little room next to the chapel. Nothing but a wall separates me from Jesus. And the glass door of the tribune is just opposite my own door and only two paces away. You can imagine how I enjoy my divine surroundings. Looking through the window on the other side, I have on the right the wall of the chapel, on the left the old and beautiful church of Saint-Jacques; whilst just opposite I have the belfry of a building which is both seminary and episcopal residence. Our Lord, quite alone, on every side of me!

I have heard so much said about Tournai that I feel well acquainted with it. I believe the novices are as fervent as they are numerous and that you will profit considerably by the grace which so many sacrifices, made everywhere about us, must have merited.

A Dieu, my dear little sister. Pray much for your invalid sister that she may be sanctified. I make the same prayer for you. Let us meet in the Heart of Jesus. It is in Him that I am devotedly yours,

MARIE DE L'AGNUS DEI.

She then writes to her mother:—

Liége, September 29, 1901.

Dearest Mamma:

The peace of Jesus! I can only add a word to my long letter to Françoise, to give you some

account of my exile. I am as well here as is possible, in soul and in body, in a room which is alongside the chapel,—which means for me that I can visit it much more easily. My horizon is closed by the beautiful church of Saint-Jacques, which must date from about the fifteenth century and which is a pleasing sight to one so fond of ancient monuments; the more so as I am so glad—and that is much more supernatural—to have a tabernacle on that side also and to be able to catch the chanting of the *Credo* at the High Mass, for the church is very near. In front of the church there is a large square, from which we get plenty of light and air.—The community is large, as you may well imagine. They are much crowded, but they are only too happy to make room for the newcomers. There are twenty of us "exiles" already, with perhaps more to come. The persecution has its advantages: it redoubles one's fervor, it increases union of hearts, it nurtures charity and many virtues besides.

And I feel more French than ever! To any one who does not love France I would say, "Go into exile, and you will see!" Yet I find *everything* here, except the air of my native land. So I am far from being saddened by anything; but I feel that I am of French blood and that it is the Government of my native land that has cast me out of France; and I assure you, it is altogether strange to be really exiled and to feel that one *cannot* go back into one's country. But how it does make one pray that God may save this unfortunate land which we so much love! . . .

I so much regret our missing Yvonne at

> Paris. But it would have been too good for all of us to have been together. It was not joy's sweet hour, but a time for sacrifice. The time for joy will be later, when some brighter day will dawn.

This "brighter day" was to dawn only in eternity. Rudely thrust from her convent at a time when her illness called for so much care, Marie de l'Agnus Dei's strength was not equal to this last trial. Exhausted on her arrival in Liége, she encountered the first rude breezes of a comparatively inclement climate and immediately contracted a cold. It occasioned no anxiety at first, but in a few days she was seized with a fever and showed symptoms of pneumonia. On Friday the 11th of October she was visited by the physician. Whilst pronouncing the case one of pneumonia, the doctor, notwithstanding the general condition of the patient, did not consider there was any immediate danger, but in the evening she grew much worse. She suffered considerably, her breathing was painful and any change of position was becoming more and more difficult, as the paralysis was gradually taking possession of all her left side. She passed a painful night, and when the doctor returned on Saturday he was dismayed by the progress made by the disease. Indeed, all hope was now past. Meanwhile, the sufferer was quite calm; but, overcome by weakness, she spoke but little, and what she said was scarcely audible. It was by her gracious smile or by the aid of her pencil that she made herself understood. Almost continually, her gaze was fixed upon the crucifix of her vows, which was placed in front of her, though at times she would contemplate with closed eyes her Lord as

within her soul. A slight movement of the lips showed that she was praying, and any one who listened close to her could hear her murmuring: "Jesus! . . . I love You with all my heart." The hours of Saturday wore on in pain, resembling, in their measure, the three hours passed by our Saviour on the cross, when all of a sudden, in the afternoon, she was seized with a fit of suffocation. Fearing immediate danger, the Mother Superior asked her, "Would you not be pleased to receive Extreme Unction and the visit of our Lord?" Panting for breath, the poor child recovered sufficient animation to answer, "Oh! yes . . . most happy!" Word was sent to the community confessor, who came in haste. Happily, her paroxysm abated, and the dying religious was able to receive with recollection the great sacrament of the sick, and with it that last tender infusion of grace into the Christian soul which is about to quit its earthly exile. As the paralysis had attacked her throat it was only with great pain and difficulty that she succeeded in swallowing a very small particle of the sacred host.

Fortified by the sacred unction and bearing in her heart the One she had so much loved, Marie de l'Agnus Dei, really and sensibly united to the Lamb that was slain, became deeply absorbed in her act of thanksgiving. Her Mothers and Sisters stood about her in respectful silence. What more impressive, if we could but hear it, than the last intimate colloquy of a soul with its divine Spouse, who stands awaiting the hour of the eternal nuptials? Who can penetrate to the secrets of that mysterious hour? What mercies may then be accorded by Him who is mercy itself, especially to those select souls who have never deserted Him. *Surge, amica mea!* [1]

[1] Arise, my beloved.—*Cant. of Cant.*

What sweet accents these, and how sweetly they light on the hearts of those who are so soon to respond to them! Yet a little while, yet a little more suffering, and the veil will drop, and the cry of wonder that will issue from the soul to whom God is at last revealed will re-echo throughout eternity.

Solemn as were the emotions that held sway in the hearts of all during the hours of waiting that ensued, the faithful heart of Marie-Anne did not lose thought of the absent ones. She thought of her mother, who was so severely tried, and of her brothers and sisters, and of her relations and friends, all so far removed from the exile; and as her paralysis prevented her from speaking, she asked by signs her Superior's permission to express through another medium something she wished to say but was unable to express by word of mouth. She made a supreme effort to rise and put some words on paper. They were barely legible, but they proved the perfect clearness of her mind; were indeed a summary of her life; and ended with the passionate ejaculation which she so much loved. They were as follows:—

> I offer my life for the Society, for France, for my family, for the work of Reparation, for all the intentions of the Heart of Jesus.
>
> I thank from the bottom of my heart our beloved Mother. Thanks to you, dear Mother, thanks to all who have had care of me and have prayed for me. I thank all my superiors; I shall pray for all. Pray for me.—A heartfelt adieu, in our Lord, to my family. May all become holy!
>
> I am happy to have suffered much and to be a child of the Society, which I love with my

whole soul. I place in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary my life and my eternity.

12th of October, 1901.

I love Thee, Jesus!

She had been thought to be at the point of death, but after Extreme Unction she experienced a sensible improvement. Such changes often occur, for reasons which God knows best. On Sunday the doctor was much gratified by his visit, and in the evening he found his patient so much better that he was persuaded all immediate danger was past. The paralysis, however, was as bad as ever. Those who watched at her bedside succeeded one another without interruption; her breathing was much easier; and her attention to what was passing was so perfect that she often reminded others of the orders given by superiors in her presence. When the hour was forgotten by others her pencil was set in motion. She even called for the medicine prescribed her, although she was scarcely able to swallow anything. When some pious reading was suggested she smiled sweetly and by a glance from those eyes which were so full of life to the last she expressed her thanks.

It will be remembered how solitude had placed its seal upon her spiritual life. All alone, at the age of fourteen, she had consecrated herself to God; alone, at eighteen, she had left home for the novitiate; she was alone at the pronouncing of her vows; for several years she was alone in her suffering; and the same loneliness was to mark her passing from earth.

This solitude was so much a part of God's designs in regard to Marie-Anne that her relatives, who had been written to as soon as there was manifest danger, did not

receive the message till it was too late, owing to circumstances difficult to explain except as willed by the Almighty. The first news to arrive at Angers was news of the death of Marie de l'Agnus Dei, and the circumstances attending her last illness were not learned till later. God had thus made the exile more complete for her than for others, as her dying eyes did not fall upon any one at her bedside who had loved her from her cradle. She must accept a death devoid of all natural consolation,—separated as she was from her own, whose absence she may have noted with some surprise; separated from the Father who had nearly always been her guide in the spiritual life; separated from the superiors or other religious whom she had best known.

And yet, besides the consolation she had in dying in a house of her order, God provided another which was precious to her heart. One of her companions of the novitiate, like herself an Angevine, Mlle. F——, whom she had not seen since leaving Toulouse, happened to be in Liége at the time. It was this young religious who, in a manner, represented at Marie-Anne's bedside both family and country, from which they were both held aloof, and she fulfilled her rôle with a touching delicacy and affection.

During Sunday night the condition of the sufferer was so far good as to dispel all fear of imminent danger. Members of the community were appointed to sit up with her by turns. At eleven she made a slight motion as a reminder that it was then time to awaken the next sister in order. She then asked, with heroic fidelity, for the medicine which she had so much difficulty in taking. This was her last act of generosity. After this effort she fell back upon her pillow and seemed to fall asleep.

The Mother who was sitting by her was careful to remain quiet, for fear of disturbing her. There was no sign of suffering in the invalid; she was entirely motionless and her breathing was calm and regular. She remained thus for about two hours; then, all of a sudden, with no accompanying signs of a struggle, her head drooped. The religious drew nearer to her and asked her, "Are you in pain?" She received no answer. In the profound peace of a union which had become habitual, Marie de l'Agnus Dei had passed from out herself into God, to abide in Him for eternity.

She was a little more than four-and-twenty years of age.

The precious remains were prepared for the last journey during the night, and it was only on rising in the morning that the community learned that it numbered one more of its members in Heaven. The door of the little room was open, and those who passed by could see their young sister as she lay in her religious habit on her poor little bed, with her hands clasping her beloved crucifix, and so calm, so marble-like, so sweet to look upon, that those who saw her could not but think her soul was infinitely happy. The same impression was produced during the two days before her burial upon those who succeeded one another in keeping vigil over her remains. Though she had been not fifteen days in Liége her virtues had become well known. The Father who came regularly to hear the confessions of the nuns asked to be taken to see her. He remained with her a long time on bended knees, and when he arose he said to the Mother Superior, "I have asked her to obtain for me many graces." There were greater demonstrations of veneration on the following day, when they carried her

body to its last resting-place; and they were all the more surprising as she was so young and, because a stranger, so completely unknown. Her father's name was in the papers, it is true, and a halo was cast about her by the persecution, but the sweet odor of her virtues affected more deeply, and we may say mysteriously, the hearts of all.

The Father who from her childhood had known her soul so intimately and who had always been in touch with her life had received prompt information of her death, and in compliance with a desire which Marie-Anne had herself expressed wrote to Madame Hervé-Bazin:—

> Who could help loving this dear child, even though he had had only a glimpse of her? But to you, who knew so well her beautiful soul, her incomparable heart, her exquisite delicacy of sentiment, how dear she must have been! And now she is torn from you! But it is Jesus who has nipped her young life from its stem, borne it away from the earth and placed it beside Himself. . . . He would have her in Heaven because she was his, and because she was really no longer of this earth. Her heart lived in Heaven and she was ripe for Paradise. . . . How bright must be her crown and how happy her present existence! . . . Behold her in the midst of her brethren, the saints and the angels, and by the side of Mary Immaculate. . . . Her happiness will solace your anguish. To think of her at Jesus' side—how supremely consoling!
>
> Great indeed must have been the love of Jesus for his lamb; else He would not have had her suffer so much. Such crosses He does not send but to the favorites of his Heart. He crucifies

> in order to beatify, in order to add luster to the eternal crown and render the victim glorious like Himself. The Divine Lamb willed to immolate his little lamb by degrees,—for was she not for many a day on the altar, or upon the cross? For the rest, the dear child, who had received immense graces, especially in her last retreat, had in a special manner offered herself to Jesus. The sacrifice was accepted and united to that of the great Victim sooner than we should have expected. Jesus was in haste to possess her . . . and her last trials had completed his work. She had accepted all, willed all. She quitted France and severed herself from a family, a mother, so dear to her, for the love she bore her Lord. She had nothing more to offer. And Jesus would have her end her exile here below and pass to her true country, that fairest of countries, beyond the stars.

And now, she who was once Marie-Anne Hervé-Bazin and who became Marie de l'Agnus Dei is sleeping her last sleep in the land of exile. Far from her own and forever solitary, she reposes in the shadow of a poor wooden cross in one of the cemeteries of Liége. Nothing could have been shorter, simpler or more unknown than her humble life. And yet it has been deemed worthy of being held up to the contemplation and imitation of Christian souls. It is only to these, let us add, that this recital can make any appeal; for to comprehend the value of those few years of suffering, one must believe, one must love. Marie de l'Agnus Dei spent scarcely more than a few days on earth and did nought else but suffer and pray; and yet her obscurity, which could not have been more complete, has left behind it traces of light

which are daily brightening and expanding. It all comes of her having understood the one true meaning of life. It is due to the fact that in union with Him who saved the world by silence and by the cross she offered herself and was accepted, and in consequence lived and died a voluntary victim in the cause of Reparation.

Fairest progeny of a Christian race, she had in her veins the truest blood of France, which has so often been shed for the Church and for God. Sprung from a Vendéan stem and daughter of so excellent a father, she had the strong and healthy faith of her ancestors, their generous ardor and that clear apprehension of the supernatural which God bestows upon the descendants of those who have labored in his cause. In her were verified afresh the words of Holy Writ: *"Generatio rectorum benedicetur,*[1]—for we are born with the long heritage, good or ill, of our sires, known or unknown. Celestial lives like the one we have been contemplating are often the fruit as well as the recompence of virtues that have prepared the way for them. And in their turn, such lives lay up new blessings for generations yet to come, and, enlarging the sphere of their influence make their merits become the glory and consolation of the Church of God. At the same time they help to fill up the general treasury of merits from which we all derive so many blessings.

May God be pleased to raise up in France many souls who will make a like offering of themselves, in order to discharge the debts of their fellow-men. May He grant that the persecution, which proved fatal to Marie-Anne, may be the fruitful seed of many a vocation to Marie-Réparatrice, a call to which has often been so mys-

[1] The generation of the righteous shall be blessed.

terious. May He grant that the sufferings, the prayers, the love, which have been evoked by persecution may restore to our poor France the faith of its days of glory.

If the example of Marie de l'Agnus Dei and the story of her sacrifice and of the joys which it merited for her should awaken in other hearts the same desires and the same hopes as hers, the end for which she lived will have been attained. We may well trust that such will be the result when we remember the assurance given her by her Lord: "He has promised to make use of me for his work."

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